THE CLOCK & THE COCKATOO

by Ruth Holmes with drawings by Fish

D. L. Nicholson

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BY
RUTH HOLMES

WITH DRAWINGS BY
FISH

OXFORD
BASIL BLACKWELL
1922

New York
BRENTANO
5th Avenue and 27th Street

TO

DAPHNE AND BARBARA

THEIR ADMIRING AUNT

MOST LOVINGLY DEDICATES

THIS LITTLE BOOK

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE CLOCK AND THE COCKATOO	1
THE YELLOW SATIN SUIT	5
A HORSE AND HIS SUNBONNET	10
WATERING WINDOW-BOXES	12
THE TURQUOISE DANCING-SLIPPERS	16
NO THOROUGHFARE	22
THE CIRCUS	23
THE DOLLS' DRESSMAKER	25
THE ROLLER-SKATE AND THE SCOOTER	29
FEATHERS OR FUR FOR ME!	33
FLIP AND FLAP	35
SIXPENCE A TOOTH	41
THE OWL ON THE CROQUET-HOOP	46
THE BROWN RATS' BALL	48
THE MOTHER-OF-PEARL FISH	54
FROST-FLOWER SEED	60
SQUAWKIE	61
THE ORANGE CAT	63
THE MARBLE PIE	67
A GIPSY FIRE	70
BRENDA'S BLUE CAR	72
THE TORTOISE WHO CAME UP TOO SOON	76
MY NUTSHELL BOAT	81
THE ICE-CREAM BRICK	82
THE EASTER HEN	87
"THE VIPER"	91
SPARROW-LANGUAGE	92
THE GREEN CARAVAN	96
THE COCK WHO CROWED AT THE MOON	102
THE CHOCOLATE HIGHLANDER	104
THE POOL	108
MY SNAPDRAGON FLOWER BUNNY	111
THE BALLOON THAT RAN AWAY	112
THE RED SILK DRESS	115
THE VILLAGE SHOP	120

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

FACING PAGE

AFTER EATING ALL THEY COULD THEY FELL ASLEEP - - - 7
SPLASH WENT THE WATER, BANG WENT THE GERANIUMS! - - 15
HOW BETTY'S TOES HURT! - - - - - - - 18
LITTLE SISTER DAPHNE WEARS THEM NOW - - - - - 21
"HERE WE ARE AGAIN!" - - - - - - - - 24
OLIVE KNITTING A DOLL'S JUMPER - - - - - - 25
"DO YOU TAKE SUGAR IN YOUR TEA?" - - - - - 26
FASHIONABLE FLIP - - - - - - - - - 39
"ONE PULL, AND IT'S OUT!" - - - - - - - 45
A POP-EYED BABY OWL - - - - - - - - 46
AN AWFUL MOMENT - - - - - - - - - 57
THE SEAWEED PLASTER - - - - - - - - 61
PUSSY'S NEW COAT - - - - - - - - - 65
"STAND STILL, DOBBIN, AND EAT YOUR PIE!" - - - - 68
BRUSHING SILVER-SILK - - - - - - - - 72
THE RUNAWAY CAR - - - - - - - - - 73
TEA FOR TWO - - - - - - - - - - 81
TAKING OUT GERTIE AND GORDON - - - - - - 83
"WHO OWNS THIS?" - - - - - - - - 85
AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR - - - - - - - - 88
"SHUT UP!" SAID THE CANARY - - - - - - - 95
MURIEL GREW GIDDY, DIZZY AND SICK - - - - - 98
"GET UP! GET UP! COCK-A-DOODLE-DOO!" - - - - - 102
HOW THE CHOCOLATE HIGHLANDER LOVED THE SUGAR FAIRY - - 104
CAUGHT IN THE ACT - - - - - - - - 109
BALLOONS - - - - - - - - - - 112
"HELP! HELP!" - - - - - - - - - 116

THE CLOCK AND THE COCKATOO

CLARENCE the Cockatoo was a bad-tempered bird. He looked quite beautiful jigging up and down on his high perch in the dining-room, for he was dressed in snowy white feathers, and wore a bright yellow tuft on his head. But when he cried out "Cocky good Boy! Cocky wants a kiss!" Mummy and Daddy and John paid no attention and went on eating their dinner.

The wicked glint in his small green eyes told them that a painful peck instead of a caress awaited them if they drew near to pet him.

"Bow wow! Bow wow! Good Doggie! Come and have a nice bone! Come and kiss Cocky!" called Clarence whenever the Puppy ran into the room.

But the Puppy had heard all this before, and knew only too well what it meant, and he would wisely decide to have a pressing engagement elsewhere.

For once, when he was very young, the Puppy had crept quite close to Clarence, hoping for a friendly game, but Clarence had flown at him and nearly picked out one of his eyes.

Clarence hated Daddy and Mummy and John and the Puppy, but worst of all he hated the solemn old Clock that stood on the dining-room mantelpiece.

He was jealous of the Clock because it never stopped speaking day or night.

Clarence could say, "Tick Tock! Tick Tock!" just like the Clock, but the time came when he felt too tired to go on.

He often tried to drown the Clock's voice with loud shrieks and screams, but after he had shouted himself hoarse and silent with rage, the Clock still seemed as fresh as ever, and chatted briskly away in a quiet little voice.

Then, too, the Clock made a pretty silvery noise, "Ting! Ting!" every quarter of an hour, and though Clarence strove to copy it again and again, he only succeeded in making a sound like the Puppy's worst bark.

Everyone except Clarence liked the Clock. Mummy and Daddy and John often ran in just to have a look at it, and once a week Daddy opened the glass that covered its face, and put a key into its mouth. This made a whirring sound that Clarence imitated in a mocking manner.

He often made rude remarks to the Clock, and would say, "Bad Boy! Bad Boy! Go away! Cocky won't give you a kiss!"

The Clock was far too busy saying "Tick Tock! Tick Tock!" to reply to Clarence, but it thought:

"There must be something wrong with the poor fellow. They can't be winding him up properly. He ought to be sent away to have his works well oiled and seen to."

The fun began on the day that Daddy forgot to chain Clarence up again after cleaning his perch. He hurried off to the office, leaving the Cockatoo quite free to hop and fly all over the room.

Just then the Clock struck "Ting! Ting!" ten times over, and Clarence could bear it no longer.

With a big spring and a wild flap of his wings the Cockatoo landed on the edge of the mantelpiece, and clung to it with his strong claws.

He cried, "Cocky kill Clock!" in a loud harsh voice, and then hit the glass over its face two terrible blows with his grey beak.

The pieces of glass dropped with a tinkle into the fireplace and Clarence said, "Clever Cocky!" in a pleased voice.

After seizing the small hand of the Clock and tearing it off with a hard pull and a twist of his head, he caught hold of the big hand and tugged at it with all his might.

But the big hand was far stronger and tougher than the minute hand and would not break off. Clarence did not intend to be beaten, and he pulled and pulled at it until he had dragged the whole Clock over and they both took a "header" off the mantelpiece together, and landed in the grate with the most fearful clatter.

The Clock had much the best of it for it lay on the top of Clarence, who squawked and yelled underneath it with a broken leg.

It was so furious and frightened that it kept on striking and ticking at the same moment, at the top of its voice. It was certainly swearing hard, and its loud cries of "Ting! Tock! Tock! Ting!" nearly deafened the miserable Clarence, whose leg was growing terribly painful.

Now the Puppy was busy in the garden digging up all the young sweet-peas. He was not sure that this would please his Master very much, but it was the greatest fun.

He stopped when he heard the awful crash and the yells of the Cockatoo, and jumped in through the dining-room window to find out what all the noise was about.

Clarence hoped that the Puppy would lift the Clock from off him, and he shrieked, "Can't you help poor Cocky?" but the Puppy did not feel inclined to do anything of the sort.

He said to himself, "It was not the nice old Clock who flew at me, and tried to poke out my eye."

He ran closer and when he saw how helpless Clarence was, he gave a happy bark, and started pulling out the Cockatoo's splendid tuft of yellow feathers.

Clarence screamed so that it was dreadful to hear him, and at last Mummy and John who had been feeding the fowls, rushed into the room wondering what on earth was the matter.

Clarence shouted, "Poor Cocky! Poor Cocky!"

The Clock said, "Ting Ting! Tick Tock!" and the Puppy cried, "Wow! Wow!" as he tore out the last of the Cockatoo's yellow feathers.

Both Clarence and the Clock became hospital patients. Mummy wrapped up the Clock very gently, and carried it to the Jewellers to have a new small hand made for it, and a new glass covering put over its face.

The Cockatoo's broken leg was set in splints by Daddy, who rubbed a lot of vaseline into the bald sore patch on Clarence's head where the yellow crest of feathers used to be.

The Clock came home looking very new and smart, long before Clarence was cured. His beautiful tuft never grew again, and he could only jig up and down very stiffly on his perch. Not only had he lost the full use of his legs but his tongue too seemed very helpless. He never again said "Tick Tock! Tick Tock! but sat gazing at the Clock for hours with his head on one side and a sad gloomy look in his eye.

And he trembled and ruffled his wings with terror if so much as the nose of the Puppy appeared round the dining-room door.

THE YELLOW SATIN SUIT

WITH Alan and Fay clinging like limpets to the long lace train of her wedding-gown, Mrs. Jack Foster swept into the vestry beside her husband.

Jack had just time to raise the Bride's misty white veil and kiss her, before Fathers and Mothers and Uncles and Cousins came creaking and rustling round them.

"You have managed my train quite beautifully, my Ducks! Don't bother about it any more, I can sling it over my arm," said Alan's sister.

Only a year ago she had worn her hair in a pig-tail and climbed trees, but to-day Alan felt he hardly recognised Maisie. She looked so tall and lovely in her golden dress, with a great bunch of white lilies in her arms, and pearls round her neck.

Alan watched the grown-ups shaking hands and kissing and smiling, with a cold disapproving eye.

He could not forgive them for dressing him up in a yellow satin suit with frills of lace at his collar and cuffs.

Several old ladies standing by the Church-door had cried, "Oh, the little Love!" as he clambered out of the car, and walked shyly up the steps.

This was bad enough, but far worse was the rude remark of a staring errand boy who snorted, "He looks more like a young banana—to me."

"I say, have *we* been married too?" asked his little cousin Fay, breaking in upon his gloomy thoughts. She stood beside him in a bunchy little dress of the hated yellow satin.

"Of course we haven't, stupid! You can't be married without a gold wedding-ring," answered Alan severely.

Fay was not at all the sort of little girl he would like to marry. Her legs were too fat and brown, and her cheeks were much too round and red.

"Oh, I did so hope we were!" sighed Fay. "Aren't we even engaged then?"

Her voice sounded so doleful that Alan replied a little more kindly, "Well, you can be engaged to me just for the day if you like. But that is all. Mummy says she doesn't approve of long engagements."

"Oh, thank you ever so much!" cried Fay gratefully.

Jack and Maisie and the other relations had been writing things in a big book, but now the organ pealed out a loud thrilling tune, and Fay and Alan were recalled to their duties as train-bearers. They trotted down the aisle after the beaming, bowing bride and bridegroom, and were only held back from entering the bridal-car by their Aunt Lena, who firmly prodded them into a crowded taxi instead.

Home looked very queer, thought Alan, as the taxi stopped beside a strip of red baize, that ran up into the house under a smart red-and-white awning.

Waiters were scurrying about with trays of coffee and sandwiches. The guests crushed and crowded into the dining-room until the children felt quite lost in a dark forest of trousered legs and silk skirts. High above Fay and Alan the owners of the trousers and skirts chattered and ate ices, while it grew hotter and hotter down below.

At last Alan whispered, "Look here, Fay, let us get out of this! You grab a plate of wedding-cake and I'll sneak that big glass jug with the cherries floating in it. We will make a dash through the back-door and sit in the garage and enjoy ourselves."

After eating all they could they fell asleep.

A telegraph boy arrived with a sheaf of telegrams, congratulating the Bride and Bridegroom, and no one noticed the children as they slipped stealthily out of the room with their booty.

Since Cook was leaning out of the top-floor window, gazing at the arriving guests, Fay and Alan scampered through the kitchen, and out into the yard, unmolested, and entered the empty garage.

" I'll build up a heap of these oil tins for us to sit on," said Alan, and he piled a number of smelly empty tins, thickly smeared with grease, into a rough seat.

" Aren't they rather dirty ?" asked Fay a little doubtfully.

Alan rejoiced that they were. He meant to spoil his yellow satin suit as quickly as possible. He had heard his Mother say to a friend that it would come in very usefully for him to wear at Christmas parties, and he was determined that no one should ever again call him a " young banana."

" If you are too fussy to sit on them, we had better stop being engaged," remarked Alan.

Fay subsided at once, spreading her pretty skirts over the horrible tins, and the children began to attack the heavy wedges of Maisie's wedding-cake.

The white and silver icing was so sweet that it made their teeth ache, and the rest of the cake was so black and rich that they grew fearfully thirsty.

They drank in turns out of the glass jug with the bobbing cherries and green leaves floating in it. But the yellow liquid tasted far stronger than lemonade—and was not really nice ; besides it made them both so frightfully sleepy.

Their heads nodded as they leaned against each other, and the half empty jug slipped from Alan's hand, splashing his trousers and Fay's yellow dress, before it broke on the cement floor with a crash . . .

The children woke to find Aunt Lena glaring at them. " You

bad, wicked children!" she said, shaking them both. "We have been hunting for you all over the place. Maisie had to be photographed without you in the end. Just look at your nice new clothes all messed up with oil and dirt."

At this moment she trod on a piece of broken glass. "Why, goodness me!" she cried, as she picked it up, "this is your Mother's best old cut-glass jug! I remember distinctly seeing it on the buffet. It was full of champagne-cup too. Drinking champagne at your ages! How disgraceful! Who broke the jug?" she asked, shaking the unhappy children again.

"Please Aunt Lena we both did," spoke up little Fay. She felt that as she was engaged to Alan for the day she could not let him bear the blame alone.

"Rubbish, I broke it quite by myself!" interrupted Alan.

"You can't even speak the truth," hissed Aunt Lena, as she pulled the two children off the oil tins. "This is the end of the party for both of you. I shall take you straight upstairs to the nursery and lock you in."

"But we haven't said 'goodbye' to Maisie," whimpered Fay. "And I want to throw rice at them when they drive away," pleaded Alan.

But Aunt Lena did not reply, as she dragged them upstairs towards the nursery. Nobody was about, for the guests were admiring the wedding presents.

Fay felt so miserable and had such a pain from all the wedding-cake she had eaten, that she suddenly burst into sobs.

A bedroom door opened and Maisie looked out. She had changed into a lovely pale blue "going-away" dress, and a big white hat with drooping feathers was in her hand.

"Why, what is the matter, my Ducks?" she asked. "Nobody must cry to-day, you know! Come in and tell me all about it, and why you did not turn up to be photographed?"

Aunt Lena marched with them into the room, and when Fay and Alan stammered out, "It was so hot and 'crushy' in the dining-room.—We did not know it was champagne.—We only had six pieces of wedding-cake each."—Aunt Lena cut them short and told the tale of all their wickedness.

But Maisie put her arms round them and kissed them. "Dear Aunt Lena," she said, "They must not be punished or sad on my wedding-day. I am so gloriously happy, I want everyone else to be happy too."

She put on the big white hat before her mirror, and taking a hand of each dirty little culprit, she led them down the stairs again. The guests had swarmed out to say goodbye to her, and when she saw her Mother in the crowd she cried, "A pardon! A pardon—for these two Monkeys!" and everybody laughed.

Maisie's husband stood waiting for her in the hall in a smart blue serge suit. She was hugged and kissed by all the relations, and as she and Jack started down the steps, a nice uncle handed a bag of rice to Alan and another to Fay.

They pelted the ducking bride and bridegroom with the greatest enjoyment, till the rice fell in showers on the red baize, and as the big grey car glided away, the children felt sure that Maisie's last glance and wave of the hand had been for them.

They were not punished at all, thanks to Maisie's pleading, and Alan actually said, "It was jolly decent of you, Fay, to say that you broke the jug too. I think we might as well be engaged for a week," and he gave her a peck of a kiss on a round red cheek.

But they did not get off scot free, for they were both very ill indeed in the night, and Alan's Mother sent his yellow satin suit to the cleaners, and all the stains of oil and champagne came right out of it.

It is to be feared that he will have to wear it after all at Christmas Parties.

A HORSE AND HIS SUNBONNET

DURING the heat-wave last July
Old Charles, who drove the Station fly,
Invested in a Bonnet;
This jaunty headgear, smartly made
Of yellow straw and scarlet braid,
Had pompoms perched upon it.

He deemed that Jim, his ancient horse,
Would hail it with delight, of course,
And wear it with a swagger;
But when he asked him what he thought
Jim sniffed at it, and gave a snort,
And then was seen to stagger.

"Ungrateful beast!" his Master said,
And jammed the Bonnet on his head
Without a word of warning.
Wearing a shamed and sickly grin,
And scarlet ribbons round his chin,
Jim shambled through the morning.

That night he could not sleep at all,
The Bonnet hung within his stall
And put him in a passion;
No wonder other horses mocked,
His sober taste was deeply shocked
By such a gaudy fashion.

He thrust his nose at it and stamped,
He seized it in his teeth and champed
And chewed it into tatters—
He gulped down pompoms, straw, and all—
And danced around his dingy stall
With joyful leaps and clatters.

Next day he suffered.—I'm afraid
One cannot swallow yards of braid
Without *some* indigestion.
But through the sharpest bouts of pain
He neighed, " I'd do the same again
Without the slightest question."

WATERING WINDOW-BOXES

WHEN Gerald first came to stay with Granny in her little London house he thought it dark and poky.

Instead of the big attic that he shared with Brother Dick in the country, he had a wee slice of a bedroom opening out of Granny's. He could touch every piece of furniture it contained as he lay in his little camp-bed.

But he grew to love his new room because of the great pink and brown spotted shells that sat on the mantelpiece. They were splendid things to play with and to hold to his ears, when he woke early, and did not like to sing at the top of his voice for fear of disturbing Granny.

At first, too, the sitting-room seemed dreadfully tiny. Whenever he moved he knocked into something, and fell over a stool, or upset a thin-legged chair.

But there was a table, covered with a dark blue plush cloth that touched the ground all round, and made a glorious tent for Gerald. He could creep inside it and play dozens of games while Granny dusted the china, or read the paper.

The poor old lady had not the smallest bit of a garden to walk about in, only a dusty front area.

But there were two delightful window-boxes resting on light iron supports outside the sitting-room window, and both boxes were crammed with pink geraniums and big white daisies.

Every evening Granny snipped off the dead flowers with a long pair of scissors, and watered the plants from a small bright green watering-can, that she filled at a tap under the stairs.

Gerald begged to be allowed to spray the water through the rose of the can over the thirsty flowers, but each evening Granny said, "To-morrow, perhaps, if you are a very good boy." And he never seemed to have been quite good enough to deserve such a great treat.

One hot afternoon before tea-time the telephone bell rang, and Granny jumped up and rustled into the hall to answer it.

Presently Gerald heard her speaking into the mouthpiece—"Dear! Dear! Blue in the face is she?—The poor little mite!—Yes, I will come round at once and help you all I can.—This hot weather is so trying for small babies. Yes, the Doctor is always out when one really wants him.—My maid has just gone to do the household shopping, but I think I can leave Gerald alone in the house for an hour or so.—Oh yes! He *is* a pickle at times.—I'll catch the 56 bus, and be with you in a quarter-of-an-hour, my dear!"

Granny rang off, and three minutes later she had hurried out of the house in her bonnet, trimmed with the purple grapes, after promising Gerald a bag of bullseyes if he would be a good boy all the time she was away!

Gerald was fond of Granny and also of bullseyes, so he tried very hard to be good and quiet for quite half-an-hour. Then he grew restless and went to the window and looked out at the big red motor-buses, and the taxis and lorries hurrying past.

Last of all, his glance fell on the window-boxes, and he had a great idea.

Why not water the flowers as a surprise for Granny?

Now at the very back of his mind he was not sure that Granny would enjoy such a surprise. But he did so ache to use the bright green watering-can.

He went to look for it beside the tap under the stairs, but it

was not standing in its usual place. Perhaps Granny had hidden it away before going out.

This made Gerald more eager than ever to water the window-boxes, so he trotted upstairs to the bathroom and seized a great white enamelled bath can nearly as tall as himself.

It was fearfully hard work dragging it along the passage and through the sitting-room, after filling it at the tap, and a good deal of water slopped out over the pale grey carpet and made dark patches.

But what fun it was splashing the water in a heavy stream over the plants. They certainly needed lots and lots to drink on such a warm day. Gerald returned with his empty can and filled it again, but this time he was unable to turn off the tap.

He twisted it this way and that with his small fingers, but the water gushed out quicker than ever and he grew just a little bit frightened.

The only thing to do was to dash backwards and forwards with his can as fast as ever he could.

By the time he had filled and emptied the eighth can, water began to fall from the window-boxes into the area. Drip, drip! Gurgle, gurgle! Splash, splash! And the flowers were bent double and looked quite drowned.

And, oh, how his arms ached! But there was to be no rest for Gerald. Already the water from the tap had started running along the passage and hopping down the kitchen-stairs like a small waterfall.

He went on filling can after can, and each time bigger and bigger pools got spilt over the sitting-room carpet, and the water fell in heavier streams from both boxes.

The area gate suddenly opened and shut with a clang, as Mary the maid returned laden with food and groceries. She gazed up and cried out sharply, "Oh, Master Gerald, whatever are you doing, spoiling your poor Grandma's flowers?"

Splash went the water, bang went the geraniums!

And at that very second the bottom of one of the window-boxes dropped right out, and the soaked earth and flowers fell upon Mary's head ! ! ! !

She looked so funny with a dripping daisy plant standing upright on her hat, and geraniums sticking to both her shoulders, that Gerald nearly laughed.

But Mary turned quite red with anger for she was wearing her best yellow hat and a clean buff cotton dress. When she had let herself into the basement and found the water pouring down the stairs, she grew more enraged still. Gerald was carrying another full can across the sitting-room, when Mary came scolding to the door, after having turned off that tiresome tap.

Gerald felt so terrified that he let the whole thing overturn upon himself and the carpet.

" Where is your poor Grandma ?" asked Mary sternly.

" Gone out !" said the little boy in a trembly voice.

" Then you will come straight along to bed, Master Gerald, and have only dry bread for your tea," snapped Mary, picking him up quite roughly. " You have ruined your Grandma's lovely window-boxes, and soaked her beautiful carpet, and messed up my nice clean stairs, and that is enough mischief for one afternoon, I'm thinking."

It was very hot and dull in bed, and Mary walked off with all the shells, so that he was left without any playthings.

When Granny came home looking so tired, as well as so dreadfully distressed over all the damage he had done, Gerald began to feel truly sorry.

After a horrid meal of dry bread and no bullseyes, he hid his face in the warm pillow and shed a few tears, while he sadly decided he would wait until he had grown much much older, before making another attempt at watering other people's Window-Boxes.

THE TURQUOISE DANCING-SLIPPERS

BETTY lolled back on the low red velvet settee in Messrs. Parker and Poke's Boot-and-Shoe Department, and waggled her right foot in its clean white sock.

Beside her sat pretty Aunt Katie, who always wore the loveliest frocks and hats, and smelt of flowers.

A tall saleswoman in black satin hurried back to them with several white cardboard-boxes under her arm.

She knelt down in front of Betty, and lifted out of each box a smart pair of small dancing-slippers. She took from their tissue-paper wrappings a pair made of white kid with red rosettes, and red buttons to fasten the straps.

Out of the next box came shoes of shiny black patent leather adorned with little silver buckles.

Then she held up to Betty a pair made of the palest pink satin, with long ribbons that criss-crossed round the ancles.

But the last pair was the most thrilling of all. The heel-less slippers were of soft turquoise-coloured leather, and the rosettes were of tiny beads to match, and looked just like small blue roses. Turquoise beads decorated the ancle-straps.

"Now, Darling," said Aunt Katie, "which pair will you try on first?"

"Oh, the blue ones, Aunt Katie!" cried Betty eagerly, and the saleswoman slowly pressed the turquoise slipper onto her right foot.

Betty sprang down from the settee and ran to look at the blue shoe in a large mirror that stood propped upon the floor. She pointed her toes, and studied the slipper from all sorts of angles,

just as she had seen the grown-ups do, when they were choosing their large high-heeled boots and shoes.

The slipper was certainly very tight across the toes, and had a pinchy feeling, but it looked as pretty as the dancing-shoe of a Fairy Princess.

"I want this pair, please, Aunt Katie," said the little girl as she clambered back onto the red settee.

"I think they are a little bit tight for the young lady," remarked the saleswoman.

"Try on the other pairs before you decide, Betty, dear," said Aunt Katie.

The blue shoe was drawn off her foot and the pale pink satin slipper fastened on with the ribbons.

Though Betty would not admit it to herself, it was far more comfortable. She studied it, too, in the mirror, but soon scrambled back into her seat, saying, "I don't like this pair—truly I don't!"

The white shoe with the red rosette was far too large; Betty's heel slipped up and down in it.

As for the black patent-leather ones, they seemed too dull and clumsy for words, after all the light dainty pairs she had been trying on.

"Have you the blue slippers in a rather larger size?" asked Aunt Katie of the saleswoman.

"No Madam, this is the only pair we have left," was the reply.

Betty tried them on again. They hurt her, there was no doubt about it, but she could not resist them, and she assured her Aunt and the saleswoman that they fitted perfectly.

They would be far the most beautiful slippers at the Children's Party to-morrow evening, and they would match her blue silk and white net frock quite splendidly.

"Well, as you are sure they don't cramp your toes you shall have them," decided Aunt Katie.

Betty gave her a grateful hug, straight away, for the slippers were an "unbirthday present," and she had never wanted anything so much in her whole life.

The next evening Nurse took Betty in a taxi to the Party, and left her on the doorstep at four o'clock. She said she would come and fetch her at half-past seven, and told her to mind and not eat too many cream-buns at supper.

As Betty generally went to bed at six she felt most grown-up and important. She took off her big white shawl in the cloak-room and joined crowds of other little girls and boys in a great room with a shining slippery floor.

They started by playing "Oranges and Lemons" and "Musical Chairs" and then the piano and violins broke into a fox-trot and they danced.

A boy in an Eton suit grabbed Betty round the waist and bumped her along, skidding in the most unsafe manner on the parquet. Betty's feet had begun to hurt her before "Oranges and Lemons" was half over, and as the rough little boy flung her about and stamped on the blue slippers, the pain became quite awful.

Her toes ached and burned so much they felt as if they were on fire.

Betty bit her lip to keep herself from giving little squeaks of pain, and when the fox-trot was over she rushed away from her partner, and hid behind a pair of long green velvet curtains that reached to the ground, and hung in front of a deep window-seat.

She tore off both the cruel turquoise slippers and sat twiddling her poor crushed toes in their smart silk socks, and cooling them, till the music sounded once more.

How Betty's toes hurt!

But when she tried to squeeze her feet back into the blue shoes she found that she simply could not do it!

Her toes had swelled and swelled, and they refused to fit in any more, though she stamped and pushed and pulled with all her might.

There were the lovely slippers—and there were her feet—but she was quite unable to bring them together again.

She was wondering miserably what on earth to do next, when the curtains were torn apart by the boy in the Eton suit. He shouted cheerfully, "I saw you hide yourself in here. I've been to have a strawberry ice. Come and dance the Lancers." And he dragged her out on to the slippery floor in her socks.

When he saw that she had no shoes on he burst into a laugh and cried, "You can't dance without shoes you know. It isn't done at a Party!"

His loud laughter drew the other children round them, and they all stared at poor Betty's feet till she longed to sink through the floor. She hid her face in her hands, and was beginning to whimper, when a pair of strong arms lifted her high in the air, out of reach of the mocking boys and girls.

Betty peeped through her fingers, and found that she was being held by a tall man with fair hair and a tiny moustache, and merry blue eyes.

He carried her from the ball-room into a far smaller room, that had shelves and shelves of books from the floor to the ceiling, all the way round.

He sat down with her on his knee and said kindly, "Do call me 'Uncle David,' and let's be real friends. Tell me why you were going to dance in your socks? Were you born with odd-shaped toes? Or do you suffer from corns?"

Betty liked his face so much that she told him the whole sad

history of the turquoise slippers. When she had finished he said very gravely, "I know! I know! I have bought them too tight, myself, and I have often wished I had the courage to take them off at parties. Well, never mind, we will have a nice time together till Nurse comes to fetch you. If you will sit on my shoulder I will dance you round the ball-room till you feel just as if you were flying. Or shall I tell you how I shoot tigers in India from the back of an elephant?"

Betty said she would love to hear about the tigers, and he told her such thrilling stories that she was almost sorry when the supper-bell rang.

"Uncle David" carried her there and sat next her at a long table loaded with fruit-salad and trifle, meringues and cream-buns, cakes and crackers. The boy in the Eton suit wanted to sit on the other side of her, but "Uncle David" said quite sternly, "No room here for people who tease little girls!" and he slunk away.

Betty had four cream-buns. She did not know if Nurse would consider that too many, but she decided to risk it.

After supper a conjuror did the most wonderful things with a bowl of gold-fish, and red and blue silk handkerchiefs, and packs of cards, and a baby rabbit.

When Nurse called for her at half-past seven, "Uncle David" fetched the blue shoes from behind the curtains, and carried Betty down the steps to the taxi. He gave her a kiss and cried, "Good-bye, 'Miss Turquoise Slippers,' I wish I could take you back to India with me!"

It was not at all easy or pleasant explaining to Nurse and Mummy and Aunt Katie what a silly little girl she had been.

Mummy bought her a large cheap black pair of slippers with no rosettes, and plain black elastic round the ancles, and she had to wear them at all the other dances that Winter.

Little sister Daphne wears them now.

The following Christmas her younger sister Daphne began going to parties too, and as the blue shoes were just a nice comfortable size for her, she wore them with great pride and delight.

Betty tried her hardest to conquer her jealous feelings but it gave her a hot pain in her heart, every time that she caught sight of Daphne capering around in the beautiful Turquoise Dancing-Slippers.

NO THOROUGHFARE

IN a dear little home of tarpaulin and boards,
Where the wood-blocks are "up" in our street,
Lives a little old man dressed in sacking and cords,
Crouching snug on a low wooden seat.

There's a brazier of charcoal that flickers and glows
Where the wigwam's front door ought to be;
As the little old man toasts his fingers and nose
How I wish he had room there for me!

I could hang out the lanterns on trestles and poles
Like big rubies all shining and red,
And to guard a wide street full of wood-blocks and holes
Is far nicer than going to bed.

I would stay all night long by the little old man
Keeping watch o'er each pickaxe and spade,
Frying sausages too, in a battered old pan,
For the dark would not make me afraid.

And the little old man might drop off in a doze
Till the sky turned to orange and pink,
But the street would be safe from all brigands and foes
For *I* should not have slumbered a wink.

THE CIRCUS

THE Circus came the other day,
Each van was painted gold and blue,
We tossed our tops and balls away
And raced to get a nearer view,
The Circus tent, so round and white
Grew like a mushroom in the night.

When Daddy took us to the show
The Band made such a splendid noise,
We cheered the Clown, we loved him so,
He spoke to several girls and boys,
And all the funny things he said
We think of as we lie in bed.

An Elephant strolled in as well,
And sat down in a big arm-chair,
And when he rang a dinner-bell
A Monkey laid his meal with care,
And brought him such a monster bun,
Old Jumbo gulped—and it was done!

A lovely Lady in the Ring
Stood on her piebald horse's back,
And galloped round the Circus King
Who held a whip, and made it crack;
And many other sights we saw
And still we clapped and wanted more!

We hoped the Circus-Tent would stay
For ever on the Village Green.
We saw the beasts fed every day,
The vans were kept so neat and clean—
Alas! the tent came down last night,
The vans have rumbled out of sight.

But other happy girls and boys
In towns a hundred miles from here
Will share in all our Circus joys
And laugh like us and clap and cheer.
One day—slow-moving down the lane—
The Circus will come back again!

"Here we are again!"

Olive knitting a doll's jumper.

THE DOLLS' DRESSMAKER

OLIVE spread out the last of the dainty silk jumpers over the back of a small nursery chair, and turned to give yet another tweak and pat to the flounces of some dear little silk and muslin dresses, rose-pink, pale blue, and white.

These were lying on a low table, beside ducky white straw hats trimmed with coloured silk pompoms, or wreaths of tiny rosebuds.

She gazed proudly at the knitted tammies with pretty scarves to match, and at several smart lace-trimmed petticoats—for all were the work of her own clever fingers.

A week ago she had posted invitations to some little girl friends who were great doll-lovers. She wrote on her best pink notepaper, that had a small blue dove, bearing an olive-branch in its beak, at the head of each sheet.

The invitation ran as follows:

MISS OLIVE BROOKS

INVITES YOU TO HER DISPLAY OF DOLLS' SUMMER DRESSES AND HATS
ON MONDAY, JUNE 4TH. AT 4.30 P.M.

P.S.—There will be tea in the garden, and do bring any dolls that need new clothes, and ask your Mummy for some money, as it is in aid of the Fresh Air Fund. I can make dresses to measure, if your dolls are the wrong size.

Your loving little friend,
OLIVE.

To-day was June 4th., and in five minutes' time her guests would begin to arrive.

A beautiful tea of sponge-cakes and strawberry jam, treacle-buns and chocolate-biscuits, was already spread under the cedar-tree, on a round table covered with an orange-and-white check cloth.

Olive ran out of the Bungalow, that had small yellow roses growing up its white painted walls, and stood beside the open garden-gate to receive her friends. She had decided to give them tea first, before allowing them to have even a peep at the Dolls' Dress Display.

Some of the little girls arrived in a bunch. Two wheeled their dolls in smart perambulators, and the rest carried at least one doll each, to Olive's delight.

They chattered away and compared their dollies whilst waiting for Virginia. To their great surprise she came walking up the dusty road, accompanied by an unknown little boy.

He was leading some sort of animal on a long string, and it leapt and capered at his heels.

As the little group drew nearer, the children saw that the animal was the sweetest small black-and-white kid. It had short black horns, and a white stripe ran down each side of its funny black face. Its furry ears were black outside and white inside, and though its coat was a glossy black, it had four white socks.

Virginia said quite calmly, "How do you do? I have brought Eric and his pet kid Binkie. Eric's sister has got whooping-cough, and he has come to stay with us so that he shan't catch it too. He is quite kind to dolls."

The little girls crowded round the kid, and tried to caress it, but it was very wild and butted at their bare knees so fiercely, that Eric tied its string to a croquet-hoop on the lawn, and they left it to graze while they had tea.

Eric was a most interesting boy. He told them how his Uncle had given him a set of carpenter's tools for his birthday, and how he had made his sister a dolls' house, with four rooms and a flight of stairs, out of an old packing-case. He had helped her to make the furniture too, from horse-chestnuts, and pins, and gay wools.

"Do you take sugar in your tea?"

They had finished nearly all the cakes, and Eric was still explaining exactly how he twisted the wool round the pins, to form the backs of the dolls' chairs, when Olive suddenly noticed that the kid had disappeared from the lawn.

"Good gracious! He must have bitten through his string, and it was such a thick one," cried the dismayed Eric, when Olive had interrupted his wise remarks. "We must all hunt for him!"

The whole party scattered helter-skelter through the big garden, calling, "Binkie! Binkie!"

But when Binkie did at last appear, the sight of him froze Olive's blood with horror.

He strolled jauntily out from the front door of the Bungalow, with a broken doll's hat stuck rakishly on one black horn, and all that was left of a green silk jumper on the other. From his mouth hung wisps and tatters of pink and blue muslin.

Olive rushed past the wicked Binkie into the nursery, and her lip began to tremble as she gazed at what had been the loveliest Dolls' Dress Display, such a short while ago.

Five of the jumpers were missing. Binkie must have eaten them, along with nearly a dozen hats and tammies. The muslin and silk dresses that remained, lay trampled and torn upon the floor, and the kid had bitten nearly all the lace flounces off the pretty white petticoats.

"Oh, I had worked *so* hard to make them!" cried the little girl. "I *did* want to earn some money so that the poor children could have a day in the country!"

Virginia ran up to her friend and flung her arms round her. "*Of course* I will give you my five shillings for the poor children!" she said. "It doesn't matter a bit that you have nothing left to sell—though the dresses must have been ever so pretty—and I am dreadfully sorry they are all spoilt."

"And you shall have my money—and mine—and mine!" said the rest of the little guests as they piled shillings and half-crowns into Olive's hands. Eric came in, looking very shame-faced, and holding the kid's collar with a grip of iron. "Binkie and I both beg your pardon over and over again!" he said. "I have got seven and sixpence at home that Grandpapa gave me and you shall have it all for the Fresh Air Fund."

The horrid choky feeling left Olive's throat and she began to smile again. "But I couldn't take all this money and give you nothing in return," she said to the little girls. "I'll tell you what, I'll set to work and make a dress or a jumper for each of your dolls, before long.'

"And I'll leave Binkie behind, and come and help you every day," remarked Eric. "I can knit quite well, and I love turning the handle of the sewing-machine, and oiling it."

Olive was able to send quite a large sum of money to the Fresh Air Fund, for several of her friends' Mummies and Daddies were so sorry to hear of the disaster, that they sent Treasury notes to add to her collection.

And thanks to Eric's help, her friends' dolls were soon wearing exceedingly smart new Summer clothes.

THE ROLLER-SKATE AND THE SCOOTER

"I am Roderick's Roller-Skate,
I rattle along at a fearful rate!
One foot up and one foot down
Roderick travels through London Town."

SO sang a small shabby Roller-skate, strapped firmly over a cracked boot, as Roddie swooped along the wide Embankment in great easy curves.

But the Roller-skate was not the only glad singer speeding forth on that fine Spring morning!

Something was bumping away behind Roddie and his Skate, and gaining on them little by little. A couple of minutes later a brilliant red Scooter manned by a very fat little boy, had drawn abreast of them, and the Scooter was squeaking out defiantly—

"I am Algernon's Scarlet Scooter,
Clear the way when you hear my hooter!
If only Algernon won't grow fatter
We'll race the world with a rush and clatter!"

Roddie and Algy looked into each others' heated faces and it took them less than a second to decide that they must race one another till one of them dropped. The Scooter and the Roller-skate were of the same opinion, and they thrilled and shook with excitement and delight.

Roddie was much smaller than Algy but as quick and nimble as an eel, and he shot far ahead when the great race began. . . .

It was a sad day for Bing and Bong, Marigold's toy monkeys, when their little mistress absent-mindedly wheeled them across the Embankment in the smart doll's perambulator.

Marigold was a dreamy child, and she was busy planning how

she would buy a boat when she was grown-up, and keep it moored beside the Embankment steps. She and Bing and Bong would sail off in it to Africa and make friends with the live monkeys who live high up in the big forest trees.

They would . . . Crash! Crash! Scrunch! . . .

The handle was suddenly wrenched from her fingers, and the pram hurled to one side. Bing bounced into a large puddle in the road and Bong was squashed flat, so that the stuffing came out of him, beneath Roddie's Roller-skate.

Roddie himself lost his balance and fell, cutting his knuckles open against the stone parapet of the Embankment, and while he scrambled upright and sucked them Algy came puffing and blowing past him with a snort of triumph.

On a dark green Embankment seat sat Mrs. Tibbets, quietly knitting a sock for her grandchild, while at her feet her deaf old pug-dog Cherub lay snoring. He dreamt that he was enjoying a large plate of chopped liver, his favourite food, but the dream turned into a most unpleasant nightmare, in which he found himself flying through space and landing with a fearful thump on the sharp edge of the curb.

Algy had swerved into him by mistake, and now took a most unexpected leap onto Mrs. Tibbets' lap. One of the poor old lady's knitting-needles ran far into his hand, and as he clambered over her she gave a shrill cry of horror. She had caught sight of her darling Cherub lying with a big scratch on his fat yellow head.

Algy picked up his Scooter and looked it anxiously over. It was still whole, but much of the bright red paint had got scratched off in the accident. It was now Roddie's turn to come swinging past with a whoop of joy, and Algy doggedly pushed off after him, almost sobbing with weariness.

Mr. Toots liked to read the morning paper aloud to himself as he strolled by the river. He considered that nursemaids and children and other passers-by ought to get out of his way, at his time of life. He looked a very imposing figure, tall and thin, with a long white beard waving in the wind, and the newspaper flapping in his outstretched hands.

" Another grave crisis is rapidly approaching," he read in a deep booming voice, and all at once he was spinning giddily round and round like a tee-totum, while a small boy on a Roller-skate clung tightly to one of his black trousered legs and spun round with him.

The paper blew into the river, and Mr. Toots' hat followed it, while Mr. Toots himself sat down very hard on the stone pavement, with Roddie on the top of him.

Mr. Toots always declared that the Roller-skate ran right over his face, as that young rascal of a Roddie struggled off him and darted away.

Well might Roddie hasten indeed, when Algy had already wobbled painfully by on the battered Scooter.

Both boys were now getting blown and they reeled along half blindly. First one would win a little ahead, and then the other. Since no limit had been set to this terrible race it seemed as if they would have to stagger on for ever beside the river, growing more and more breathless—past the Houses of Parliament—past the great Docks—till they stuck fast at last in the mud of the Essex Marshes.

But the end came sooner than they had imagined. Algy made one of his violent unexpected swerves, and crashed against Roddie's right leg. A stagger—a long slither—and several most painful bumps—and Roddie and Algy lay close together side by side on the Embankment, with their chins just on a level in the dust.

The Roller-skate had lost a wheel and the foot-board of the

Scooter had split in half, but Roddie and Algy were completely happy. " It's a draw !" they both gasped, almost before their teeth had stopped rattling in their heads.

Never, never would they forget this wonderful race—not even when they grew to be very old men.

As for the Roller-skate and the Scooter, their opinion of the whole proceedings may be gathered from the short song they crooned together in somewhat shaky tones—

" We are both reduced to a shocking state,
Algernon's Scooter and Roderick's Skate !
But when our Masters have had us mended
Another race will be simply splendid !"

FEATHERS OR FUR FOR ME!

I WISH I were a small brown calf
A lambkin or a pig,
For no one scrubs their knees with soap
Or likes them clean and trig;
They plunge through puddles, kick up dust
And roll in mud and stuff—
I'm always sent to wash my hands
Before they're black enough!

Now if a youthful rabbit sheds
Some lettuce down his chest
His daddy does not cuff his ears,
Or look the least distressed;
The puppy does not use a spoon
But gives his plate a lick—
I spill a drop—and mummy cries
"John! leave the table—quick!"

The turkey never wonders where
His undervest has gone?—
Old Pussy need not tug and pull
Too tight a sweater on!
No duckling wears a sailor cap
With "NELSON" round the crown.
I wish *I* grew a furry coat
Or feathers green and brown!

The chickens do not sit in rows
To learn their A. B. C.
My guinea-pigs have no idea
That "one" plus "two" makes "three"!
The Birds and Animals are free
To live a life of joy,—
I wash and dress and work and eat
An over-driven Boy!

FLIP AND FLAP

IN a small stuffy cage in the "Birdseed and Household Pets" Department of a big London Store, sits Flip sadly gnawing a blackened strip of banana skin.

Flip is covered with fur that looks like pale brown plush, and his large pink ears stand out from his head. He has bright and beady black eyes, and his tail swings restlessly to and fro.

Outside the cage hangs a placard on which is printed :

"FLIP AND FLAP.
INDIAN MONKEYS.
Tame and well-behaved.
£7. 10. 0 each."

Yes, but where is Flap we want to know ?

Flip asks himself the same question over and over again, as he whimpers on the straw-covered floor.

If only the thirty canaries in the cage next door were not dozing on their perches this hot June evening, they would gladly tell us the whole story with indignant chirps and twitterings.

They have no love for Flip and each yellow ball of fluff has its back turned on him even in sleep.

Earlier that day Flip had been playing his pet game with the long sharp piece of stick that is Flap's favourite toy.

He would thrust it like lightning through the cage-bars and through the wire lattice-work of the canaries' home, and cruelly push and prod a canary off its perch.

The poor little birds hardly dared to sit and rest, for when they were least expecting it a dig from behind sent them fluttering down into the bird-bath below.

Flap has a far kinder nature than Flip and she decided that his fun had lasted long enough. Also she wanted her stick for queer games of her own. So she dropped on the top of Flip and tried to snatch it from him.

A great battle followed. They rolled over and over biting and scratching, and chased each other up and down the cage.

At last Flap seized her toy from Flip's grasp, but fearing she would not be able to keep it for more than a moment, she suddenly sent it flying through the bars. Flip was furious. He sat and gibbered with rage, and when Flap caught hold of a thick piece of twine that he considered his own private possession, he grew still more angry.

He caught Flap's pink ear between his teeth and dragged her round and round till she was dizzy.

In the struggle the piece of string became twisted tightly round Flap's neck. Flip grabbed both ends of it and climbed to the roof of the cage, where he hung by one hand and let Flap dangle into space.

He did not understand that poor Flap was choking to death as he swung her to and fro.

He expected her to scramble up and bite his tail, but instead she made strange gurgling sounds, and then hung with her limbs quite limp and still.

Now the canaries had watched the fight with the greatest interest. They cried "Tweet! Tweet!" with delight as the dreaded stick fell with a clatter on the Department floor.

But when Flap's eyes began to bulge out of her head, they grew alarmed at the plight of their monkey friend, and screamed out in chorus. Their cries grew so piercing that a young man who sold bird-seed ran to see what all the noise was about and rescued poor Flap only just in time.

She looked so ill that she was wrapped in a blanket and whisked away in a taxi to the Hospital at the Zoo without delay. Thus it is that Flip sits and mopes in his lonely cage after Closing Time in the big Store.

He and Flap have always gone to sleep with their arms round each other, no matter how they may have fought during the day, and he misses her more every moment.

He fiddles aimlessly round, and pushes fretfully against the door of the cage, that the assistant had forgotten to padlock, in all the bustle and confusion.

To his huge surprise and delight the catch gives way and the door swings slowly open.—Hurrah!—He is free to go out into the big world and hunt for his lost friend.

It is still quite light and the Chocolate Counter looks so inviting that Flip decides to put off his search for Flap for just a few minutes. He jumps from tray to tray, and perched on their edges he samples chocolates of all sorts, round, square, and three-cornered, stuffed with almonds, nougat and pink cream—till he has no room left for another.

He bounds rather heavily along to the Eggs and Butter Counter.

What are new laid eggs for if not to be thrown by the dozen with a crash on the blue tiled floor?

It is glorious to see splashes of yellow spreading in every direction and to jump right into big bowls of green duck's eggs that crack and burst beneath him.

Flip spreads handfuls of lovely golden butter all over himself—takes a couple of headers into a cask of flour in the Bakery, and bounds along a passage to the Silk Department.

Searching for Flap, he twitches off a white sheet spread over bales of bright stuffs, and leaves the marks of buttery and floury paws on blue and yellow and green and silver brocades.

Now for the Ribbon Counter! Here miles of gay ribbons hang festooned over brass rods and Flip has a splendid time. He gets the ribbons rolled round and round himself and trails them far behind him, as he dashes up the banisters of a great staircase to the Third Floor. A bottle of violet scent in the Soap and Perfume Department smells most attractive, but it does not taste quite as good as its smell, and Flip feels rather sick by the time he has gulped down half of it.

He crawls slowly into the Babies' Bonnet and Frock Parlour. "Where is Flap?" he asks himself sadly. "It is dreary work exploring this great lonely place without her!"

A small wax figure dressed in a Baby's white bonnet and pelisse draws his attention.

Flip is sure these clothes would suit him down to the ground, and deftly untying the ribbons of the bonnet he places it on his own head, well to one side, and capers proudly about.

Presently wearing the pelisse, a knitted white shawl and three bibs he runs against a large mirror.

What on earth is this object chattering and making grimaces with a smeary face framed in white daisies?

Can it be Flap, gone mad after her strange illness in the cage? The creature certainly has a long tail like hers, though it is tied up with blue, pink and purple strips of silk, also its paws shew signs of brown plush beneath a layer of sticky yellow.

But no! It must be a creature in charge of the Babies' Bonnet and Frock Parlour. Enough to frighten the poor babies into fits.

Flip hits out at it wildly and stubs his paws of course on the hard glass. This puts him in a rage, so that he dances up and down with wrath. The weird object does the same. Flip aims blow after blow at it, but nothing will drive it away and Flip's paws ache and tingle with pain. . . .

Fashionable Flip.

It is now rapidly growing dark and he can hardly see his strange foe, who luckily appears to be fading out of the Parlour.

This pretty white cradle marked "Great Bargain, 49s. 6d." has snowy blankets and a blue satin coverlet, and would be the very place for a nap.

Flip leaps into the cosy white nest, lays his odd little head on the frilled pillows and is snoring heavily within five minutes.

He is wakened by a loud shriek. Springing from his warm resting place in a flash, he swings past a pretty shop girl who looks scared out of her wits, and is laughing and crying at the same moment.

It is broad daylight and the whole Store is crowded with queer people who gaze at him with the greatest alarm, or rush after him, shouting to one another to catch him.

Half-an-hour later, he is cornered in the Boot and Shoe Department, after a glorious run, and is taken down kicking and struggling to the Manager's Office, to find it crowded with assistants. They carry bowls of broken eggs, draggled ribbons, spoilt lengths of brocade and half empty trays of chocolates.

They point at him and talk in cross tones, and he jabbers back at them, with the baby's bonnet hanging round his neck.

The Manager looks at him for some time with a twinkle in his eye and says, "Well, after this we can hardly sell him as a Domestic Pet, Tame and Well-behaved. Smithers, try and clean him up a bit and pop him in a sack, and take him off to the Zoo as a present from Rackett and Blackett's."

When two or three hours afterwards a shy and terrified Flip is pushed into one of the huge cages of the Monkey House at the Zoo, Flap bounds to meet him, to his utter surprise and joy.

She is already convalescent and in the highest spirits. "How clever of you to find me here!" she cries, rubbing her nose against

his from sheer affection. "I have made lots of friends already," she goes on, "but none of them are as nice as you."

Dozens of monkeys with fur like brown plush and big pink ears are leaping and swinging and scrambling all over the fine airy cage.

"I will introduce you to them all before long," says Flap. "But first I want you to find a flea that is bothering me, just behind my left ear. You can tell me about how you got here at the same time."

Grinning from ear to ear and sitting very close beside her, Flip sets about this delightful task.

SIXPENCE A TOOTH

"WELL, cheer up! You are to get sixpence a tooth no matter how much you yell, and a whole shilling if you can keep from crying altogether even when it hurts dreadfully."

Peter was trying to comfort his twin-sister Pamela, who sat ready dressed in the drawing-room, waiting for Mummy to take her for the first time to see Mr. Grinder, the Dentist.

She wore her second-best blue coat and a new white straw hat trimmed with blue cornflowers, in honour of this visit, and though she knew she looked very nice in them, it gave her no pleasure.

She was feeling anxious and frightened, and sat stiffly on her chair, biting her lips.

"See that old Mr. Grinder gives you the teeth he pulls out," Peter went on. "I must have one new tooth at least for the brooch I am going to make for Mummy's birthday. I have saved up five of our front teeth that have fallen out, but it is not enough for a really good brooch."

"Aunt Clara said my teeth were just like pearls," remarked Pamela with a tiny smile.

"Well, they look better than hers do anyway," answered Peter. "I do hope you will have several pulled out, Pam, then we shall be able to buy a lovely gold safety-pin and some gilt wire. I can wire the teeth on to the pin so that they will look first-rate. I am sure Mummy would far rather wear a beautiful brooch of our teeth than the ugly tiger-claw clasp Uncle Cecil sent her from India."

"Come along, Pam dear, I am quite ready," called Mummy

from the hall. Pam trotted after her through the front gate, and they hurried down the long High Street together and stopped outside a green door with a shiny brass plate.

"MR. GRINDER,
DENTAL SURGEON,"

Pamela read before the door opened, and a smart maid showed them into the waiting-room.

Pamela hoped they would have to wait a long long time, but in a couple of minutes the smart maid returned and told them Mr. Grinder would be pleased to see them now.

"And so this is my little patient?" said a big man with a bald head, and bristling eyebrows, and a kind smile, as they walked into the Dentist's Den.

Pamela noticed a splendid armchair, as big as a throne, and covered with stamped red velvet. It had a high footstool to match. A shallow fluted glass bowl was fastened to one of the stuffed arms of this chair and in it a tiny fountain of water danced up and down all the time. A tumbler stood on a metal rim at the edge of it, and attached to the wall beside the chair was a big wheel, with long ends hanging down from it.

Pamela's Mother took off her hat for her, and gave her a kiss and a nice clean white handkie to hold, and Mr. Grinder said, "Suppose you sit here, little Lady, and let me take a peep inside your mouth. I shan't hurt you."

He lifted Pamela on to the red velvet throne and tilted it in such an odd way that she saw her feet, in their neat strap shoes and white socks, sticking up higher than her head.

"Open wider, please," said Mr. Grinder as he put a tiny round looking-glass at the end of a long handle into her mouth, and passed it over all her teeth.

"There is a tooth in the lower jaw that ought to come out, Mrs. West," he observed, "and here is a loose front tooth that will fall out of its own accord in a few days, so I won't touch it."

In spite of the fact that Daddy had promised her sixpence a tooth whether she cried or not, Pamela could not help feeling very glad indeed that only one tooth was to be pulled out.

"I am going to put some nice stuff on your gums so that you won't feel any pain," said kind Mr. Grinder, and he rubbed on some queer smelling liquid till Pamela's jaw grew quite cold and numb.

He picked out an instrument that looked rather like the compasses in Peter's drawing-box, and thrust it into her mouth.

Pamela felt so nervous that she kicked Mr. Grinder hard at the bottom of his waistcoat, but even this did not make him angry. Perhaps he wore steel armour under his clothes to protect himself when he was pulling out little girls' teeth.

He gave a quick hard tug and Pamela was sure her whole jaw was coming off, though she felt no pain whatever.

A second later Mr. Grinder drew out the precious tooth and flung it into the middle of the fountain of water. It jumped up and down and then disappeared through a little hole at the bottom of the glass bowl.

Pamela had felt certain Mr. Grinder would hand her the tooth with a bow, and when she saw it had really vanished away, and that she would have nothing to take back to Peter to add to the brooch, she burst into loud sobs.

She could not even tell Mummy why she was crying so bitterly, for the brooch was a great secret and a surprise for her birthday.

All the way home the tears kept hopping down Pamela's face and running into her mouth.

Peter rushed at her as soon as she entered the nursery and cried

out, "Hullo, Pam! Where are the teeth? How much money did you earn? Did it hurt fearfully? Do tell me all about it! Why are you crying?"

Pamela began weeping all over again as she tried to answer Peter's many questions.

At last she managed to sob out, "Mr. Grinder threw—my beautiful double-tooth—into the little fountain! It was washed —right away. Oh! Peter, I am *so* miserable!"

When Peter saw how unhappy Pamela was he could not reproach her though he felt much worried over Mummy's birthday present.

It might be quite possible to buy a gilt safety-pin and some wire with the sixpence Pamela had earned, but it would look such a poor sort of brooch with only five teeth adorning it.

"All my teeth feel as firm as rocks," he said gloomily. "I am sure I shan't lose another before Mummy's birthday. It is only three days off, you know."

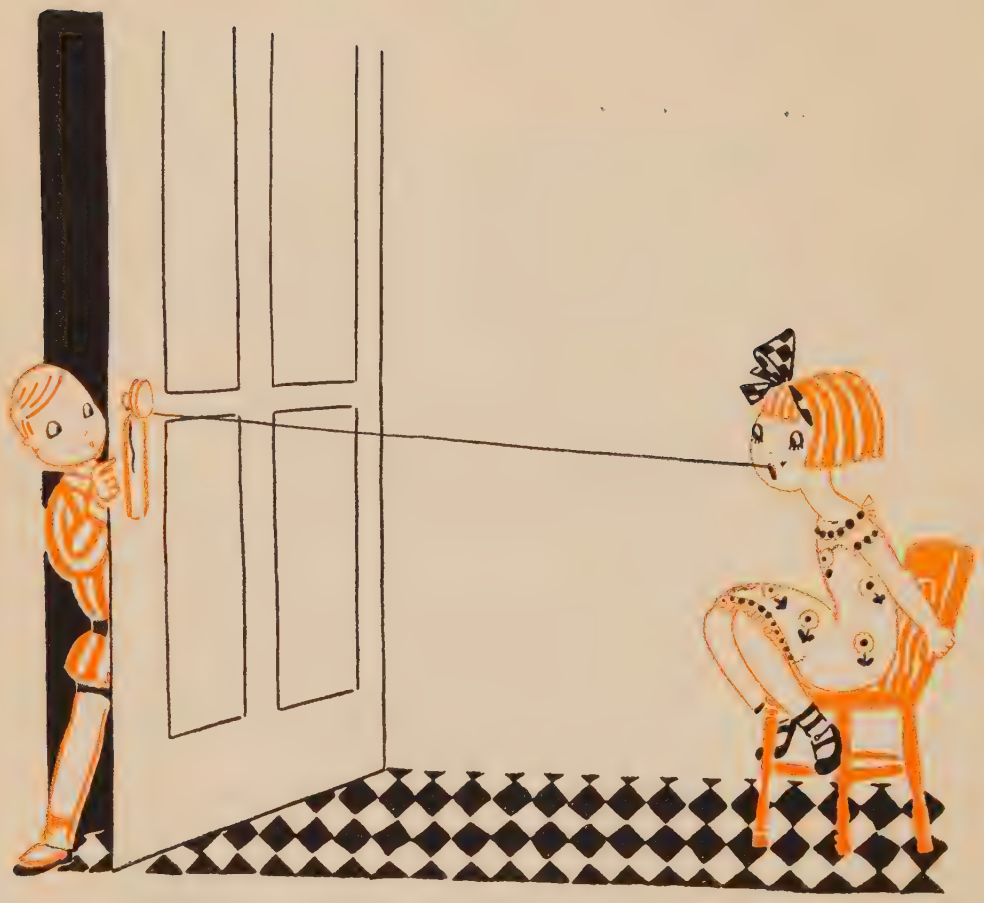
A sudden gleam of hope came to Pamela. "Oh, Peter," she cried, "I have just remembered, Mr. Grinder said one of my front teeth was beginning to be loose and would fall out in a short time. If I pulled very hard perhaps it would come out to-day."

"That would be perfectly splendid," shouted Peter. "What a brick you are, Pam. We will have a good try to get it out after dinner."

That afternoon both children tugged and pulled at Pamela's front tooth but though it certainly wobbled a little it refused to budge and still stuck fast in her head.

"Of course there is one way that is certain to succeed, but it would hurt a bit, I expect," said Peter doubtfully.

"Oh, do tell me," pleaded Pam. "I don't mind how much it hurts so long as we can make Mummy's brooch look really lovely!"



"One pull—and it's out!"

"Well," replied Peter, "I'll show you how. Sit down in this chair, Pam. Now I am going to tie one end of this fine bit of string tightly round your tooth, and I shall fasten the other end of it to the handle of the door, while it is wide open. You must sit tight in the chair and I will slam the door to, and your tooth will just *have* to come out."

"Very well," said Pamela, "you may do it, Peter. I don't feel afraid of you, as I did of old Mr. Grinder this morning. . . ."

A minute later Pamela sat, looking rather pale, with a red gap in the middle of her upper row, while Peter untied the string from the pearly white tooth he held in his hand.

"It is a beauty, Pam!" he announced, "and will make just all the difference to the look of the brooch."

Mummy was quite astonished to find that Pam's front tooth had come out so remarkably quickly. "It *is* a pity," she said. "I wanted you to look as nice as possible, for Mrs. Green is coming to tea to-morrow, and she is sure to ask to see you."

But she was still more surprised and astonished when the twins gave her the wonderful brooch at breakfast time on her birthday. Peter had mounted the six teeth on the gold safety-pin in the cleverest way, and Mummy pinned it on to the new pink silk frock that Daddy had given her, and hugged both the twins hard.

"Now I know," said Mummy, "why your last front tooth came out so quickly, Pam. It must have hurt you quite a lot to get it out. You must not pull out any more even for me, Darling."

But Pam, who had quite forgotten the pain, only smiled as she touched the brooch and said, "Thith wath the tooth, Mummy!"

THE OWL ON THE CROQUET-HOOP

THERE was a pop-eyed Baby Owl,
A careless downy youngster he.
While peering at the big gold moon
He toppled from his hollow tree.

He fluttered o'er the garden-lawn
And, perching on a croquet-hoop,
Cried out "Mama! Help, help! Mama!"
With such a loud and piercing scroop

It sounded like a rusty key
Turned harshly in an un-oiled lock.
The Bats wheeled past with frightened squeaks,
The Puppy ran and hid from shock.

The sleepless inmates of "The Grange,"
Were maddened by his infant hoots,
And tried to quell the ceaseless din
With several pairs of heavy boots.

His screams stopped dead at half-past one.
Fat Mrs. Tabby, old and wise,
Knew far too much of life to fear
A ball of fluff with brilliant eyes.

A pop-eyed baby owl.

And when " Mama " came sailing home
With such a tasty bunch of mice,
And missed her Baby from the tree,
She called him once—she called him twice—

She fluttered o'er the dewy lawn
And found (I fear this tale is grim.)
Three feathers and a merry-thought
Was all the Cat had left of him !

THE BROWN RATS' BALL

STELLA, the White Rat, had moped and sulked in the most foolish manner for quite ten days before receiving a thrilling and unexpected invitation to the Brown Rats' Ball in the Old Granary.

Frank, her young master, had brought Stella with him to Apple Tree Farm where he was spending the Summer holidays, but she thought the country terribly dull and quiet, for she was a smart London Rat.

She had just finished cleaning and brushing her thick snowy coat one morning, and was drooping elegantly in her comfortable cage near the living-room window. As she gazed into the untidy farm-yard with sad ruby-red eyes, the King of the Brown Rats himself caught sight of her.

He was proceeding in state to the hen-house on an egg-hunting expedition, but he immediately commanded his six Rats-in-Waiting to stand with their backs turned until further orders, and climbed over the low window-sill to greet Stella with a regal bow.

Although he was such a vulgar common shade of brown, Stella thought it would be pleasant to speak to someone of her own race, and so curtsied gracefully in return.

Charmed by her beauty and whiteness the Rat King fell tail over whiskers in love with her, and begged her quite humbly to honour him by attending his Royal Ball on the following night.

Stella had never before been admired by a King and when she learnt his lofty rank she began to think he looked scarcely brown at all. He seemed to grow quite noble in appearance.

"One of my Rats-in-Waiting shall bring you an invitation scratched by my own paw," said the King. "And should you kindly deign to accept it, you will find four Rats of the Royal Body-guard stationed outside your window at ten o'clock to-morrow night, in readiness to escort you to my Palace."

"If your Body-guard will wait on the opposite side of the house, below the first-floor window with the red and white curtains, I will consent to appear at your Ball for a few minutes," answered Stella. "At night my little Master takes me upstairs with him, and opens the door of my cage, so that I can curl up beside him on the pillow while he sleeps. When his eyes are closed, I can jump down to the old gutter, and then run along the strands of ivy to the ground."

The idea of the Royal Ball had quite gone to Stella's head, and she gave no thought as to how she was to leap up from the gutter to the high window-sill on her return.

Her joy was great when a few hours after the departure of the Rat King, a good-looking courtier Rat appeared, holding carefully a large yellow laurel leaf, between his pointed teeth.

He pushed it through the bars of the cage and withdrew without a word, having thumped his tail three times on the table in token of his deep respect.

The King's sharp scratches stood out like red ink on the dried leaf, and Stella read his invitation over and over again.

Translated from Rat-language it ran—

"Come scrabble and dance
And scuffle and prance
On the Rat King's Granary-floor!
There are bushels of corn
To be eaten ere dawn,
And what can a Rat want more?"

All that night Stella turned and twisted on Frank's pillow from sheer excitement, and woke him more than once by slapping her long pink tail across his face.

She spent the whole of the next day making her coat as bright and burnished as possible. She meant to show the dowdy brown Court ladies how smart and beautiful a White Rat from Kensington could look.

She refused to share Frank's simple supper of bread-and-milk for she knew that a rich feast of corn awaited her, and soon after ten o'clock the four members of the King's Body-guard beheld a dazzling vision running lightly down the swaying creepers towards them.

Even to Stella's London eyes the Old Granary appeared a most splendid building in the silver moonlight, and her admiration grew still stronger, when she was conducted through a hole half underground, into the Rat King's vast Palace.

High up under the roof stretched great oaken beams, on which sat hundreds of little young Rats, who were not yet old enough to join in the dancing at Court Balls.

They squeaked with delight as they recognised Fathers and Mothers and Aunties on the Granary floor.

The grown-ups stood in thousands in solemn rows, awaiting the entrance of the Rat King. They all faced his empty throne—a very old reaping-machine that had been left to rust in the middle of the Granary for twenty years or more.

None but the King might mount its lofty seat. Even the King's Consort, should he ever marry—would only share it on her wedding-day.

Huge wooden bins of grain and corn stood on the Rats' dancing-floor, and made Stella's mouth water.

She was still in the dark shadows near the hole when every Rat

suddenly covered its face with its paws, and bowed its head three times to the ground.

The Rat King had appeared in the Ball-room. He walked slowly round before mounting the reaping-machine and was about to give the signal for the Ball to begin, when he spied Stella from his throne. Quite forgetting all kingly dignity he skipped off it again and hurried towards her.

"How beautiful you are!" said the Rat King. "Come into the centre of my Ball-room so that all my people may see you and admire. Make way. Make way there—for the lovely White Princess Stella!"

The Brown Rats gazed at her in astonishment and wonder for she was the first White Rat they had ever seen. They whispered to each other with their whiskers touching. The King led Stella right across the Granary, and actually commanded that all heads should be bowed in her honour.

"What a queer-looking object she is!" said a fat Mother-Rat to a friend. "I must own I much prefer a good healthy shade of brown to such a pale delicate coat that would soil so easily," and she glanced with pride at the dark glossy dress of her own young daughter, whose first grown-up ball it was.

The dancing now began. Every Rat held his neighbour's tail in his mouth, and they leapt, scrambled and scurried in great circles, ever faster and faster. To Stella fell the privilege of holding the King's tail, but unfortunately her own had been gripped by a jealous Lady Rat, who bit into it so severely that she nearly squealed aloud with pain.

"You are tired, oh, wonderful Princess!" said the Rat King presently. "Come and sit beside me on my throne."

When the Rats saw Stella in this lofty position, they stopped dancing and began to whisper together once more. But Stella and

the King noticed nothing. He was telling her how lovely he thought her, and begging her to marry him and become the Queen of the Brown Rats.

Presently a grave old Rat, quite grey with age, dragged himself to the foot of the throne and addressed the King thus, "May we humbly beg your Majesty to tell us if you intend to elect the Princess Stella as your honoured Wife?"

The King was amazed at this interruption and squeaked fiercely, "Pray what has it got to do with you?"

"It means much to all of us, Sire," replied the old Rat quietly. "*You might have piebald children, oh, Great King, and we could not bow the head to a piebald Prince!*"

"*Nor could we curtsey to a brown and white spotted Princess!*" cried a crowd of Court Ladies.

"No, never, never!" declared the whole assembly shrilly.

"Should Your Majesty deign to retire into private life, we would of course hail the Princess Stella as your Bride in all friendliness," the old Rat spoke once more.

Stella waited to hear the King say that he would marry her at all costs, though she was not at all sure that she wished to accept him, if he had to give up being a King for her sake!

But to her horror he said nothing of the kind.

Instead he slowly turned his brown back on her and began—as if absent-mindedly—to sidle down from his throne, leaving her quite deserted and alone. Then seizing the tail of a pretty little Lady Rat he danced gaily off with her, while Stella boiled with rage and shame.

Utterly ignored by the rude crowd of dancers, she jumped from the reaping-machine, and made her way to the hole and out into the moonlight. She scrambled up the ivy shaking with anger, and vowed to herself that she would cut the Rat King dead if she ever met him again.

She reached the gutter which was choked with rubbish and withered leaves, but when she attempted to spring on to the window-sill at a bound, she fell back, soiling her spotless coat.

Again and again she jumped upwards with no success, and grew so exhausted at last that she was unable to move, and lay in a swoon amid the dust and the dirt.

When Frank woke in the morning and found she was not beside him on the pillow, he hunted for her all day in the greatest anxiety. He glanced into the gutter, but the withered leaves had blown over Stella, and she was now looking quite brown enough to please the Rat King's people.

Hours later she was roused from her stupor by the rain beating down so fiercely into the gutter that she was in danger of drowning.

Frank was sadly eating his bread-and-milk, and sorely missing his pretty pet when a faint little cry, like the squeak of a new-born mouse made him rush towards the window.

The queer little sound was repeated, and it certainly came from the gutter. Frank leant out so far that he nearly over-balanced, and as he felt along the gutter his hand touched something limp and soft.

He lifted out the dirty, shivering, miserable Stella and holding her most tenderly, ran straight to his Mother for help and advice.

Poor little Stella was given a good dose of brandy out of a thimble, and laid in a cosy cotton-wool bed in her cage. She ached in every limb, and it was a week before she was strong enough to sit up again and begin cleaning her coat.

During the rest of her visit to the farm-house she was a sad and quiet Rat, but soon after she returned to Kensington she was married to a splendid White Rat Prince who loved her dearly all his life.

When she caressed her beautiful snowy children it sometimes crossed her mind that it was a very good thing they were not *piebald.* But her happiness was so great that she scarcely ever recalled the Rat King's cruel behaviour at the Brown Rats' Granary Ball.

THE MOTHER-OF-PEARL FISH

WHEN Alan ran into Granny's drawing-room after tearing about in the blazing sunshine outside, he felt as if he were taking a delicious plunge into a cool quiet pool.

The pale green curtains were drawn against the heat, and the peaceful room was full of shadow and very still.

Granny sat in a big arm-chair with her hands folded, generally dozing, and it seemed as if the room had gone to sleep with her.

She would wake up and smile, when Alan came in with a hot flushed face.

A glass of lemonade stood waiting for him on a little round table beside her, and after he had enjoyed feeling the cold drink trickle down his throat, he would ask eagerly, "May I play with the little red Cabinet, Granny?"

This Cabinet had been given to Granny's Granny, by *her* Granny when she was a little girl of eight as a reward for having worked a beautiful sampler in cross-stitch.

On the outside pagodas and temples and Chinese boys and girls, and birds with long tails, were painted in gold, but though Alan liked to look at them, and to run his finger over them, he liked opening the Cabinet doors better still, for inside were five little drawers full of treasures.

One drawer held little sewing things. A small gold and turquoise thimble, gold scissors with a mother-of-pearl handle, and golden bodkins.

In another drawer lay a writing set with a mother-of-pearl pen and a little gold box that had held sand to sprinkle over letters and dry them, in the days before blotting-paper was invented.

The third drawer had a chess-board and a set of carved chessmen in red and white ivory, and the fourth contained a draughts-board and draughtsmen of yellow and ebony wood.

But the fifth drawer was the most thrilling of all, for in it lay flat counters of mother-of-pearl in the prettiest shapes.

There were round, oblong, square and oval counters with roses and lilies carved on them, but six were in the shape of queer Chinese fishes.

One of these fishes Alan loved most dearly. It had a big head with large round eyes and an open mouth, and its curly tail had spikes on it.

The mother-of-pearl of which it was made was shot with lovely rose and blue lights.

Curled up on the cushions of the wide sofa with the red Cabinet beside him, Alan played with this strange fish for hours. He enjoyed the cool feel of it and would sometimes put it in his pocket for a moment just to pretend that it was really his.

On the last day but one of the holidays he felt he could not bear to say "goodbye" to the fish for nearly a whole year. He would not be coming to stay with Granny again till the following Summer.

He did not believe that Granny ever looked into the Cabinet when he was away, and even if she did, she would never notice that there were only five Chinese fishes instead of six.

He would take the greatest care of the fish, whom he had named "Ling Chang," and would put it back again in the drawer on his next visit after having shown it to all the boys at school and filled them with envy.

It would not be like stealing, for of course he quite meant to return it—some day !

Alan slipped Ling Chang into his pocket, closed the Cabinet and put it back on its stand, and ran out of the room while Granny was still asleep.

That night Ling Chang was placed under Alan's pillow, but he woke to find the little fish lying hard and cold upon his chest. The spikes of its tail had pricked Alan, and roused him from sleep.

Alan's conscience now began to prick him too. He wondered if it was kind to take away Granny's wonderful fish, after she had been so good to him—hardly ever telling him to go and wash his hands, and giving him all the puddings he liked best, to eat.

Ling Chang also might be unhappy far away from his brother fishes in the Cabinet drawer !

Alan sat up in bed and the feeling grew stronger and stronger in his heart that he must go and put Ling Chang back at once. He might not have a chance to do it in the morning for the cab would drive up directly after breakfast to take him away to the station.

The moon was full, and Alan thought he could find his way downstairs and into the drawing-room without taking a candle. Clasping Ling Chang tightly he opened the bedroom door very gently and crept down the creaking stairs.

The drawing-room was darker than he had expected for the shutters had been closed and only a ray or two of moonlight managed to squeeze through the chinks, but he groped his way to the Cabinet, opened the doors and dropped Ling Chang into the fifth drawer, after stroking him with much affection. The fish fell in with a little click, and Alan began to feel his way out again, when he knocked against something which crashed over with a great noise.

An awful moment.

Alan stood quite still in the darkness wondering if the clatter had roused Granny or her old servant, Martha.

He waited for a long time but could hear nobody stirring and he was beginning to move cautiously towards the door, when the sound of footsteps on the stairs made him clamber on to the sofa, and pull the big cushions all over himself.

"Don't be frightened, Ma'm," said the voice of Martha as the footsteps came into the room, "I have the poker with me and the burglar will get a greeting that he does not expect, when I catch him."

"Don't be too venturesome, Martha!" said Granny's sweet old voice. "Oh my heart is beating so fast that I must really sit down."

For a dreadful moment Alan feared that Granny might sit on the sofa on the top of him, but she collapsed into a chair close by, while Martha roamed round the room with a candle held high in one hand, and the poker in the other.

"Somebody has been in here, Ma'm," she whispered. "Your little table has been knocked over."

"Oh dear," sighed Granny, "I am really too old for this sort of thing—I feel so faint."

"Well, the burglar is not here now," answered Martha, "I expect he has climbed out through the pantry window and is far away by this time. I wonder what he has taken with him?"

Alan hoped that Granny and Martha would go back to bed now, and give him a chance to slip upstairs, especially as a feather from one of the cushions began tickling his nose in the most maddening way. He bore it for a long while and then gave an unexpected and terrific sneeze.

Granny cried out in a fright, "Oh, what was that? My heart, my heart!"

Martha gasped, "There is someone lying under the sofa

cushions, Ma'am. I'll give it to him!" and she was just going to bring down the poker with a terrible whack on the sofa, when Alan sprang up, flinging off the cushions, and cried out, "It's me, Granny. I'm dreadfully sorry about your heart. It's me!"

"Why, the poor child must have been walking in his sleep, Martha, and thought the sofa was his bed," said Granny when she had recovered from her alarm and astonishment.

"No, Granny, I did not walk in my sleep; I have been awake all the time," said Alan bravely.

"Martha, go and fetch me my drops for my heart," said Granny, "and now, Alan, come and tell me how it all happened."

Alan confessed everything and the story was much easier to tell in the darkness.

"I'm sorry, Granny," he said again at the end of it.

"Well, you put Ling Chang back, Alan," observed Granny.

"Yes," said Alan.

"And you told me the truth, instead of letting me think you had walked into the drawing-room in your sleep?"

"Yes, Granny."

"Give me a kiss and run off to bed," said Granny. "Here comes Martha with my drops. My heart will be all right again soon, dear child."

Granny was not up the next morning to see Alan off, so he went into her bedroom. She was in bed still, and wearing a pretty lace cap and a white shawl.

As she said "goodbye" to Alan she put a little parcel into his hand.

"Don't open it till you are in the cab," she said, "and don't lean too far out of the window of the train."

Martha waved to him from the doorstep, and he felt glad that

she had not banged him on the head with the poker, for he was fond of Martha.

While he was driving through the green lanes to the station he untied the little parcel. As he undid the tissue-paper wrappings his fingers began to tremble with excitement for Granny's parting present seemed to be—it felt like—it *was—Ling Chang!*

Ling Chang.

FROST-FLOWER SEED

THE Frost-flowers sparkle
All over the pane,
When they bloom in the night
It is Winter again.

I would barter my pegtop
My bricks and gay beads
For a small shining handful
Of Frost-flower seeds.

I would plant them deep down
In a drift of white snow,
And then creep out at night
Just to watch how they grow.

Every glittering petal
And leaf would unfold
When the moon's silver rays
Lit the darkness and cold.

I have asked, quite in vain,
And have hunted indeed
For the Shop made of Ice,
That sells Frost-flower seed.

And perhaps it is wiser
To snuggle in bed,
While the Frost-flowers grow
On my window instead.

The seaweed plaster.

SQUAWKIE

WHEN Squawkie rests on an old brown barge
Stuck in the mud of London River,
He stands like a bird of painted wood,
For it's very bad form for a gull to quiver!

His Parents' home is a rusty buoy,
But they called him "noisy and rough and trying,"
And drove him off to the nursery barge,
Where young gulls perch when they're bored with flying.

Oh what a life these youngsters lead!
They wheel in the air with screams of laughter,
And drop on the water, and fight, and miss
The fish and weeds they are diving after.

They ride for miles on the rising tide
When the waves are heaped into foaming ridges,
And "Lower your funnels!" they rudely cry
As the tugs come racing under the bridges.

There ran one day to the River's edge
A little girl in a scarlet jumper,
She carried a bag of bits of bread
For she thought the gulls should be looking plumper.

Young Squawkie flew with an eager throng
And snatched at a crust too huge to swallow,
He gulped and struggled to get it down
Lest the other gulls should perceive and follow. . . .

The bread stuck tightly in Squawkie's throat,
He could not breathe, and his eyes were popping—
But his Mother, chatting with Mrs. Wing,
Saw her choking son in the water flopping.

She banged his head on a hard grey stone,
When the crust jumped out, she hammered it faster,
She pecked him well where it hurt the most,
And then wrapped his neck in a sea-weed plaster.

* * * * *

When Squawkie looks from the old brown barge
A jumper makes him inclined to shiver—
And he'd ruffle his wings at a bag of bread—
But it isn't "the thing" for a gull to quiver.

THE ORANGE CAT

WHEN Daddy had made May Tree Cottage look as bright as a new toy with paint and whitewash both outside and in, he said to Bob and Clara, "Now, Children, what about doing up your Summer-house? There is still a good deal of paint in some of these pots and I can spare you an old brush or two. 'Binks' is too young to lend a hand of course! Mess about just as you like, only remember to put all the pots and brushes back in the tool-shed each time you stop work. I don't want the chickens to step into the pots of paint. Who knows? They might begin to lay blue or purple eggs for breakfast."

Clad in painting overalls, the children spent three glorious days decorating their real home. It was in the Summer-house that they used to cook wild-strawberry jam on a tiny oil-stove, and brew blackberry wine and make mushroom stew, and give tea-parties for their little friends.

But this year instead of looking a grubby hole, with thick cob-webs dropping from the ceiling it might have been hung with bright bits of the rainbow.

Bob and Clara had whitewashed the ceiling, and the walls were sky-blue half the way up, and orange the rest. The wooden floor was painted a rich cherry colour and the old wicker chairs and the table had a coat of brilliant lemon-yellow paint.

The outside of the Summer-house they had decorated with green and white stripes and it had a purple front door.

"It is just like a house in a fairy tale," cried Clara. "Now that it is finished we must fetch Mummy to see it."

Mummy had been begged not to come near it till the work was completed, so that it might be a big surprise for her.

"Hadn't we better put away the paint pots and the brushes first, as Daddy wished?" asked Bob.

But "Oh, bother!" answered Clara, "we shall only be gone for a moment. Mummy is talking to Mrs. Smith over the garden hedge and we can bring her back here in half a second. I'll put all the pots and the paint brushes just behind the Summer-house, so as not to spoil Mummy's first view, and we can clear them away afterwards."

As soon as Clara had dumped the brushes and paint pots out of sight, the children ran to fetch Mummy, but as she had strolled with Mrs. Smith for some distance down the lane, it took them nearly ten minutes to catch her up.

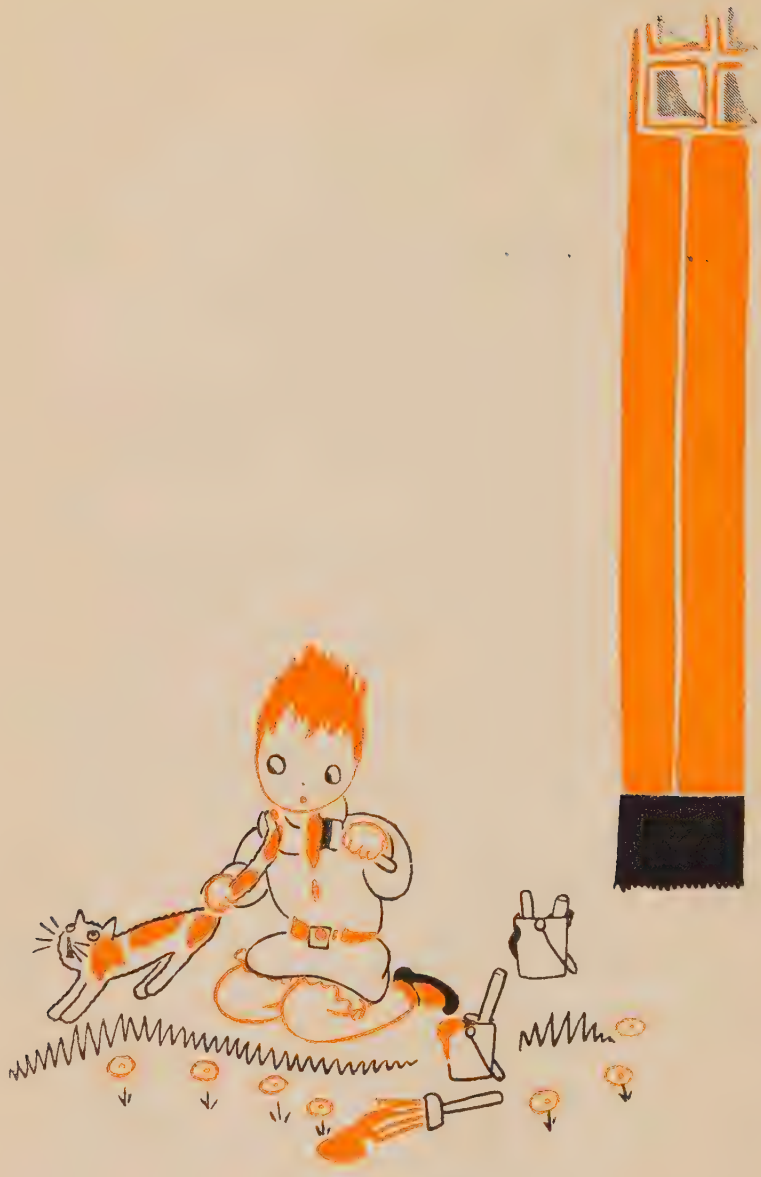
Meantime Binks, the children's baby brother aged two-and-a-half, had managed to escape from Sarah, the maid, and was trotting towards the Summer-house with a thin white cat squeezed tightly in his fat arms.

The white cat hated Binks who had a terrible habit of pouncing on her as she lay asleep in the sunshine, and of carrying her in most painful positions, but though his hands were covered with scratches from her sharp claws, Binks still regarded the cat as his own special pet, who must go with him everywhere.

Binks had had a good nap and felt ready to work hard at anything interesting that might happen to turn up.

He gurgled with joy at the sight of the pretty Summer-house and toddled round it dragging the white cat by the neck.

When he reached the spot where Clara had placed the paint pots and brushes he knew that a delightful task lay in front of him.



Pussy's new coat.

" White is a very dull colour for a cat to be," thought Binks. " It looks dirty so soon too."

With great firmness he gripped the cat between his knees, and dipped the big brush in the orange paint.

The cat had never been beautiful when she was white, but she looked the queerest object now that she was bright orange. Her fur clung tightly to her body so that she seemed thinner than ever, and even her whiskers were orange-coloured.

Her one wish was to rub herself against anything she could find so as to get off some of this cold clammy stuff that Binks had plastered all over her. She tore in at the open Summer-house door, and pressed herself madly against the sky-blue walls the whole way round, leaving great smears and patches of orange behind her.

The tracks of her four orange feet showed all over the cherry-coloured floor, and she jumped on each of the lemon-yellow chairs and on to the table, and covered them with paw prints and splashes of paint.

Binks had quickly followed his pet, with a pot of purple paint in one hand and a dripping brush in the other.

Wherever the cat had not left an orange smudge Binks carefully slapped on a good brush full of purple. He was soon delighted with the appearance of the Summer-house, which looked as if a big bag of confetti had been emptied into it, and he turned his attention once more upon his pet.

Binks thought that a touch of purple about her tail, ears and paws would greatly improve her. But this was too much for the cat who gave a loud mew when Binks rushed to grab her again. She flew out at the door and up the green and white walls on to the Summer-house roof where she crouched defiantly, and paid not the least attention when Binks called after her, " Dear Kitty ! Binks loves 'oo ! Come and be stroked, Kitty dear !"

It was the sight of this strange orange creature moving about on the roof of the Summer-house that gave Bob and Clara their first shock, as they hurried Mummy along.

They had tied a hankie over her eyes so that she should see nothing till she reached the threshold of their lovely home, and as they guided her down the path they began to have a queer feeling that something dreadful had happened since they had been away.

A loud cry of horror from both of them made Mummy snatch the bandage from her eyes.

Just inside the Summer-house which now looked like a nightmare dwelling, stood Binks with purple hair and a purple face, and stripes of orange and purple over his legs and arms and his little white suit.

He had used up the purple paint upon himself, as the cat would have none of it, and he was feeling fearfully pleased with the result.

"Oh, Binks, my poor darling!" cried Mummy.

"Oh! Our poor Summer-house!" wailed Clara.

"Oh! Our poor table and chairs!" groaned Bob.

"If only we had put the brushes and the paint pots away," moaned both the children.

When Daddy told them that evening that the Summer-house must be left just as it was, for the rest of the Summer, the children felt the punishment to be a just one, though it was very hard to bear.

They were too ashamed to give tea-parties in it to their little friends, who would be sure to laugh at the absurd splashes and splodges of paint.

The wild-strawberry jam and the blackberry wine did not taste nearly as nice as usual, made in such an odd-looking spot.

But Bob and Clara grew wonderfully good that year at putting their things away as soon as ever they had finished using them.

THE MARBLE PIE

DEAR me! How it rained! It began pattering on the window pane just as Dick, Anne, Bill and Jane were cracking their boiled eggs at breakfast-time.

When they put on their goloshes and waterproofs to go for a run in the wet with Mummy at twelve o'clock, they found that the whole road had turned into one big puddle.

They splashed through the muddy water like young ducks, while the rain made their cheeks quite wet and stiff with cold.

Mummy read them a fairy story after dinner, and it poured and poured harder than ever.

"The road must be a lake by now," said Mummy. "If you go out again you will have to wear your bathing-suits and swim."

"I can't swim yet," cried Jane.

"And I can only float," said Anne.

"Well, let us all keep cosy and warm indoors, and have toasted buns for tea for a treat," said Mummy. "You can play at whatever games you like, while I write a letter to Granny."

Mummy left the room and the children sat on the floor round the fire and tried to decide what they should do first.

"I have a grand idea," said Dick. "We will make cakes and pies for the Teddy-bears and all the dolls. Poor things, it is such a long time since they have had a good feast."

"My doll Rose, must not come to the feast," said Jane with a sigh. "She jumped into the bath with her clothes on, and now she is in bed with a bad cold and her dress is hung up to dry."

"I will go and ask Mummy if we may have some dough,"

cried Anne. Soon she came back with a nice big lump of dough made out of flour and water, and a board. She had a rolling-pin and some dear little pie-dishes, and cutters made of tin.

"Let us take it in turns to make a cake or a tart," said Jane. "Dick had the idea, so he shall start off first."

Dick soon set to work. "I am making button biscuits for the Teddy Bears," he said. He rolled out a bit of dough quite thin and smooth and pressed a small cutter into it. Each time he did this a flat round piece of dough shaped like a biscuit came away in the cutter. Dick then took some black boot-buttons from a work-box and stuck them all over his biscuits.

"My turn now," said Anne. "The dolls say they would like a red ink Roly Poly." It was quite easy to make. A few drops of red ink spread over a long strip of dough, looked just like the best jam. Anne rolled the strip with great care and pinched up the ends of the Roly Poly. "It is quite ready for the oven," cried Anne with a proud smile.

"Now for a sea-shell cake!" said Bill, as he took Anne's place. First he made the dough into the shape of a birthday cake. Then he got his bag of shells and took out lots of small pink and white ones and put them all over the top and the sides of his cake. It did look pretty. "How the dolls will love it!" said Jane. "I must make a marble pie for your three clock-work mice."

Jane put six blue and red marbles into a little dish and rolled out a pie-crust of dough which she laid over the top of the marbles.

"Now they are all ready to be baked!" cried the boys and girls as they clapped their hands.

Mummy put the good things they had made into the oven for a short while and Anne and Jane got the dolls clean and tidy for the party.

Dick and Bill fetched the Teddy-bears and the clock-work

"Stand still, Dobbin, and eat your pie!"

mice from their cupboard. They brushed the bears' fur coats, and wound up the clock-work mice so that they ran at full speed all the way to the feast.

It was a lovely party. Even Rose had a button-biscuit as she lay in bed, and it made her cold quite well again in five minutes. Jane got her up and wrapped her in a shawl, so she came to the tea-party after all.

"The poor old rocking-horse has nothing to eat," said Anne. "See how sad and lonely he looks!"

She took him a good piece of marble pie. His mouth was wide open, and a blue marble rolled right down his red throat!

Whenever they ride on him now the children can hear the marble rattling inside him as they rock to and fro, and it reminds them of the pouring wet day on which they first made Cakes and Pies.

A GIPSY FIRE

FAR in the woods I found to-day
The ashes of a Gipsy fire.
Oh, lucky Gipsy boys and girls,
You lead the life I most desire!

You pop into a grimy pot
The fowl you stole from Farmer Jones,
And no one calls your manners queer
Because you gnaw the chicken-bones.

You sleep beside the dancing flames
Wrapped in a tattered rug or shawl,
You see the big stars blink, and hear
The shy wood-creatures squeak and call.

No matter—when I am a man
I shall go further than you go . . .
Cut steps in shining walls of ice
And climb tall mountains topped with snow.

I shall fly long green dragon-kites
With yellow children in Japan,
And eat my birds' nest soup beside
A slant-eyed, blue-robed Chinaman.

I'll watch the Persian girls and boys
Weave carpets to an ancient song,
I'll camp beside the desert wells
With snarling camels swift and strong.

And when I've seen a hundred lands
And walk on English soil again
I'll find your moss-grown caravan
Still creaking down the same green lane.

BRENDA'S BLUE CAR

THE first time Brenda rode down the drive in her smart peacock-blue motor-car she pedalled straight into the postman who was bringing a parcel to the front-door.

Luckily his legs were very strong, from having to walk so many miles every day, so he only wobbled a little and said, " Steady now, little Miss ! You put me in mind of my time at the Front. The Tanks were something cruel the way they ran into a fellow."

The second time she went out for a spin, Brenda steered in the wrong direction, by mistake, and nearly sliced off part of Miss Selina Popple's right foot.

Unluckily each of Miss Popple's toes had a corn on it, and when two wheels of Brenda's car had bumped right over all five corns, Miss Popple screamed and cried, " You are a very naughty, careless little girl ! I promised the dear Vicar I would distribute all these Parish Magazines this afternoon, and now you have lamed me so badly I shall have to hobble straight home."

But Brenda was not discouraged by these little accidents.

Her fat bare knees bobbed up and down at top speed as she tore along the garden paths every day. She upset a few times into the celery bed, but soon became quite good both at pedalling and steering, and she decided the time had come when she could safely take Silver-Silk with her, for a ride down the road.

Silver-Silk was Brenda's grey Persian kitten. She had big topaz eyes and a lovely feathery tail, and she wore a jade-green leather collar with her name and address on it, for she was very valuable and had a long pedigree.

Brushing Silver-Silk.

The runaway car.

Brenda did everything she could to make Silver-Silk love her. She fed her with the daintiest bits of chicken and fish, and gently brushed out her beautiful coat every morning, and was always trying to cuddle and pet her.

But Silver-Silk did not care for caresses. She preferred to sit by herself in the biggest armchair, looking very calm and proud, so that everyone might admire her beauty.

It was only right and fitting she thought, that Brenda should wait on her and make a fuss over her. Common tabby or ginger cats might show affection for their little mistresses, but not she.

Brenda felt sure that a ride in the beautiful peacock-blue car with its gilt steering-wheel and smart lamps, would please even the haughty Silver-Silk.

So one fine morning she carried the kitten to the car and placing her on a little purple cushion in her lap, pedalled gaily down the drive and out at the front gate.

At first Silver-Silk was too much astonished and alarmed to do anything but sit as still as possible. In spite of the purple cushion, she was jolted up and down in a most undignified way, and she did not take the slightest interest in the people on the footpath, or the big cars and vans in the road.

They had not gone very far before a terrible thing occurred! A large shaggy sheep-dog whose coat was white and grey in patches, bounded out from a villa called "The Laburnums" and gambolled playfully beside them.

Silver-Silk was both furious and terrified. Her mother had taught her to regard all dogs as her mortal enemies. She slipped off the cushion in her dismay, and dug her sharp claws deeply into Brenda's knees. She arched her back, and her tail stiffened, while she began to spit at him just as if she had been the most vulgar ginger or tabby colour.

The sheep-dog could not understand such queer behaviour! He had been brought up with several kittens at "The Laburnums," and always treated them in the kindest manner. They were so fond of him that they would lie beside him on the hearthrug, or clamber all over him and tease him.

Brenda pedalled as fast as ever she could with the kitten clinging to her legs and hurting them fearfully. She tried in vain to get ahead of the sheep-dog. He thought the race was a delightful joke and lumbered along with his foolish woolly face thrust as close to the kitten as he could get it.

At this point the footpath ran at a great height above the road, and unluckily Silver-Silk suddenly lashed her feathery tail across the little girl's face, nearly blinding her.

Quite unable to see where she was going, Brenda drove the car over the edge, and it fell with a crash and a thud on to the stony road. . . .

The kitten had cleverly sprung clear, just as it turned over, and she was up a tall tree in a flash, spitting and scolding at the sheep-dog from a high safe branch.

But Brenda lay so still under the little blue car, that the dog grew alarmed, and felt sure something was wrong. He bounded back to "The Laburnums" and found his mistress making a rabbit-pie in the kitchen. Though his nostrils twitched, he hardly glanced at the rabbit's paws and head—dainties he dearly loved—but seized Mrs. Brown's skirt between his teeth, and tugged so hard that she simply had to go with him down the road. Her hands were all floury, and she still wore her big brown cooking-apron.

When the kind sheep-dog had brought his mistress to the rescue, she was shocked to find the little girl lying senseless in the road. She had a great cut on her forehead from a sharp stone. Mrs. Brown lifted the broken car off her, and picked her up, and carried

her gently home to her mother—for she knew Brenda well by sight, and also where she lived.

When Brenda came to, she found herself in bed with a bandage round her aching head. The Doctor had been, and had sewn up the cut with five stitches, while she was still unconscious.

"Oh, Mummy, is Silver-Silk safe?" were the first words she said, and a search party soon set out to hunt for the missing kitten.

Now Silver-Silk had been feeling most neglected and mortified. No one had noticed her up on her high branch, or admired her topaz eyes and grey fur. As the hours passed she grew miserably lonely and hungry, until she longed for Brenda, who had always been so kind and good to her.

She dared not venture down lest she should meet the sheep-dog again, and when Brenda's Mother actually appeared beneath the tree and cried, "Silver-Silk, Silver-Silk, where are you? Come home, good kitty!" she was only too delighted to mew in reply, and leap down into her arms.

When she was placed on Brenda's bed, for the first time in her life she curled herself up into the little girl's arms with a really affectionate purr. In fact she could hardly be induced to leave Brenda for the three days she had to spend in bed.

The love of her beautiful pet consoled Brenda greatly for a very sad loss. Alas! the peacock-blue motor-car was a total wreck and Brenda was never again able to ride in it.

THE TORTOISE WHO CAME UP TOO SOON

UNDER his brown coverlet of earth in the geranium-bed Tim, the Tortoise stirred and woke. He felt the first warm February sunshine striking through the soil. "Spring is here!" said Tim sleepily to himself.

Slowly he pushed his way upward through the damp mould, and as soon as his head reached the surface of the bed he peered anxiously round to see if his old enemy the Tabby Cat were lurking in the shrubbery, or sitting on the lawn.

Though Tim had been asleep for nearly five months, he remembered only too well how the wicked Cat had sharpened her claws on his back, scratching the beautiful brown shell all over, and hurting his feelings deeply.

In fact he buried himself quite a fortnight earlier than usual last Autumn, so as to avoid further ill-treatment from her.

Seeing that she was nowhere about, Tim drew himself entirely out of the geranium-bed, and stood looking like a very sedate old gentleman in a very large overcoat.

"Dear me! I don't see a single young green leaf anywhere, and the wind is far colder than I expected," sighed Tim.

The sudden burst of hot sunshine had deceived him, for he was not in the habit of digging himself out until the beginning of April. By the time he had crawled stiffly across the lawn, he realized that he had made a grave mistake. The sun went in, and heavy rain began to fall, chilling his head and feet. Luckily his shell protected his body just like a big umbrella.

"I shall have to get under cover again," he groaned, and moved as rapidly as possible over a gravel path and into the greenhouse. Here he found the Gardener's pet box of young seedlings placed on the floor near a stove.

Clambering into it Tim made an excellent meal, devouring half the boxful of tender little plants—after which he burrowed down into the box as far as he could, and fell asleep again, with the warm earth tucked round him like a blanket.

But Tim's slumbers did not last long. The Gardener came into the greenhouse early next morning, and could hardly believe his eyes when he found that quite half the young seedlings had disappeared, while the rest were crushed and trampled down.

He noticed the earth was humped over Tim's body, and putting in his fingers, he drew out the unhappy Tortoise.

"Out you go this moment, old Shellback!" growled the Gardener in a great rage. "If it wasn't that Cook is so fond of you, I'd wring your neck!" and swinging the terrified Tim by one leg he tossed him onto the rubbish-heap.

It was a very cold day with heavy black clouds, and Tim, still only half awake, began digging himself into the rubbish-heap under dead plants and withered leaves.

The wind felt like ice on his bruised limbs, as it whistled through his uncomfortable shelter. He had a chilly meal off a mouldy piece of frost-bitten turnip before sinking once more into an uneasy sleep.

Unluckily the Gardener soon forgot all about Tim, and decided next morning to make a bonfire of the rubbish-heap, and Tim was roused by strange crackling sounds and stifling clouds of smoke.

Tongues of fire leaped closer and closer to him till he felt sure his shell was cracking in the great heat. The smouldering leaves beneath his feet grew so hot that he began to dance up and down

as no Tortoise had ever danced before. Making a mighty effort he heaved himself to the edge of the burning rubbish and half-rolled, half-scrambled out of reach of the flames.

He dragged himself sadly on to the lawn again, and lay there for a long time panting and miserable; there seemed to be no place left where a respectable Tortoise could bury himself, and doze in peace until the real Spring days arrived.

"I am getting to be an old Tortoise now," he sighed, "and this weather will soon be the death of me. Cook will miss me when I am gone."

He whimpered, and tried feebly to pick at a brown stalk of grass, only to find it was too tough to swallow.

But what was this strange stuff floating down from the skies? It fell like cold feathers, covering the lawn with a sheet of white. Soft as thistle-down it piled itself on Tim's shell, and a fearful chill crept through him.

The big snow-flakes whirled faster and faster and began to bury him, for he was too numb and stiff to stir a yard. Where *could* he go? The snow was spreading an icy mantle over everything.

Only his head was still showing like a small brown speck on the lawn, when the Tabby Cat came out for a run. She bounded through the drifts, leaving the prints of her paws behind her. Her keen eyes caught sight of Tim's head, and she came up to him at once.

"Ho! Ho!" she purred. "What are you doing out here, Mr. Tortoise? Don't you find it rather cold? What a pity you are not in the nice warm kitchen. I have a fine family of five young kittens lying safe and snug there, and it is high time they learnt how to sharpen their claws on your back."

"If you will only carry me there, your kittens may sharpen their claws on my shell as often as ever they like," said the Tortoise very faintly and meekly. He thought to himself that if he once got into the kitchen the kind Cook would rescue him from this horrible plight.

"Ah, you are humbler now, Mr. Tortoise!" mocked the Cat. "My pretty little dears are not quite old enough to jump at a reel of cotton yet, so perhaps you would do as a plaything instead!"

The Tortoise made no reply, so the Cat dragged him roughly along over the lawn, and across the yard, and into the kitchen, where her five hideous children were fighting and cuffing each other in a corner near the range. But Cook was nowhere to be seen. . . .

Tim felt sure he would not live long with five kittens torturing him at the same time, but at least he would die where it was warm, and not out in that horrid cold white stuff.

"I have brought you a nice toy to play with, Children," said the Cat, dropping the Tortoise with a thud on the floor. "Come along! You can dig your claws into him wherever you please and sharpen them on his ugly old back."

Tim hunched himself under his shell and closed his eyes, while the kittens ran mewing towards him.

But just as he had given up all hope a kind voice cried, "Mercy me! Why, it's Tim, the Tortoise! How did you manage to get here—you poor old dear?" and he was lifted gently on to a white wooden table by Cook, who had returned to the kitchen after fetching a clean apron.

Scorched, frozen and dead-beat the Tortoise was just able to realize that all his troubles were at an end.

Cook fed him on delicious bread-and-milk followed by a spoonful or two of minced mutton as a special treat, and he was wrapped in

a shawl and placed on a cosy part of the range, which was not too hot, while Cook filled a large box with sawdust.

She laid him in it and heaped the sawdust over him and raised box and all on to a high shelf in the kitchen cupboard, which the Cat could not possibly reach.

Tim fell at once into a glorious sleep and it was not until late in April that Cook waked him again.

He looked timidly round for the Cat and her five children but they had all been sent away. The Cat had stolen a roast chicken from the dining-room table, and she and the young kittens were given away to anyone who would take them. So no one now attempts to scratch the back of happy Tim the Tortoise.

Tea for two.

MY NUTSHELL BOAT

I HAVE a little nutshell boat
That fears not wind or tide,
My stout brown ship can keep afloat
On waters deep and wide.

She bears a cargo in the hold
Of snow-white grains of rice,
Or big blue beads to sell for gold
Or purple beans and spice.

A match has made her tall strong mast
A scrap of silk her sail,
She flies a flag and travels fast
With all the Dolls' House Mail.

The Teddy Bear has sent a note
To ask the Dolls to tea,
I'll have to sail my walnut boat
Ten miles across the sea.

The Dollies send a message back
They're lying ill in bed,
So "Teddy" begs a Rabbit black
To come to tea instead.

I'll drag my boat high up the shore
And furl her sail with speed,
Unless I lay his tea by four
Old "Teddy" growls with greed.

THE ICE-CREAM BRICK

AT first sight it was somewhat hard to believe that Dennis Brown could really be both the President and Treasurer of such an important association as "The Polar Bears' Ice-Cream Club."

Presidents do not as a rule spend most of their spare time pushing a pair of very naughty babies in a battered old pram.

Yet, though Dennis was small for his age, and not famed for his cleverness at school, he had run the Club in a successful and business-like way ever since it had been founded one hot Saturday afternoon at the beginning of May.

Once a week the other Polar Bears, numbering eleven, happy, noisy little boys, would bring their pennies to Dennis, who forthwith solemnly inspected the wares of an Italian Ice-cream Man, and drove the best possible bargain with him.

The boys crowded gleefully round the gaudy barrow licking their lips until their President after much thought, made his final choice between lemon, strawberry and vanilla.

Clasping the little paper cornets of ice-cream, the Polar Bears then tore off to a fenced-in piece of waste ground—pulled up a loose board or two—crawled inside—replaced the boards—and settled down in a shady corner to spend a glorious ten minutes with their tongues laid lovingly against the frozen sweetness.

But on this last Saturday of a grilling July, Dennis, w , had big ideas, persuaded the members of the Club to hand over double the usual sum, to be spent on an ice-cream Brick.

These beautiful Bricks, striped bright pink and yellow, and

Taking out Gertie and Gordon.

guaranteed to remain hard for two hours if kept in a cool place, were on sale in a smart tea-shop in the High Street.

It was just half-past two when Dennis shoved the purchased Brick in its stout card-board box behind Gertie's fat little back, as she bounced about in the aged pram.

At four o'clock the eleven were to meet him in the Park near the fountain, armed with plates and a knife, and the ice-cream would be divided into twelve exact portions by his skilful hand.

It was a most unfortunate thing that Dennis should have been burdened with Gordon and Gertie for the whole afternoon. Not only was it hard work bumping the twins along to the Park, but they were certain to screech loudly all through the Club meeting, unless given frequent licks of ice-cream from his plate.

One of the sharp corners of the box now began to bother Gertie, and with a quick backward grab and a gurgle she pulled it out, and flung it far into the road.

An errand-boy on a red bicycle ran right over it and was all but tripped up by it.

As the President picked up the badly crushed box, dusted it, and stuffed it this time behind Gordon, he began to have a sick feeling that he was in for a troubled afternoon.

Only two minutes later Gordon thrust a dirty little hand behind him, snatched at the box, in imitation of his sister, and threw it so hard that it landed in a pailful of salt water standing just inside a fishmonger's shop. . . .

The fishmonger was busy serving a customer, and when he turned round, it was some time before Dennis could make him understand that he did not want to steal one of the flabby plaice out of the pail, but only to fish up his precious ice-cream Brick!

It looked such a sad sodden parcel after its soaking in salt water that the fishmonger's heart was touched.

"See here, Sonny!" he said. "Your ice won't be fit to eat if you keep it in that damp box any longer. Turn it out, and I will wrap it up in a bit of clean newspaper for you."

The Brick had quite lost its elegant shape and a good many fish scales clung to it by the time the kind fishmonger had tied it securely in a sheet of the *Daily Mail.*

Dennis decided to hold the string of the parcel in his mouth for the rest of his journey. He dared not place it within reach of the wicked twins again, and the handle of the pram was in too broken a state for him to hang the Brick from it.

When some rude boys passed him and cried out, "Look at Rover, carrying a bone! Hi, Rover, good Doggie!" he spluttered with rage but said nothing, and kept the string firmly clenched between his teeth.

Once within the green shade of the Park, Dennis sighed with relief, and placed the Brick beside him on the ground with Gertie's old shawl over it. He then drew from his pocket a thrilling paper-bound book called "The Man-Eating Tiger."

But he had not followed the Tiger's gory career for long, before loud shrieks from Gordon and Gertie, who were still fastened in their hated pram, made him look up wearily. "Down, down, down!" they yelled in chorus, "Down, down, down!"

It was hopeless to try and read amid such a din, so Dennis undid their well-chewed straps, and plumped them both on the grass with a thud.

"Now if you two kids don't behave yourselves," said their big brother, "I'll give you over to a Policeman, and he'll take you to prison."

After making this terrible threat Dennis returned to his book, and peace reigned for quite a long while.

"Who owns this?"

It began indeed to seem too quiet and peaceful, and Dennis, having seen the "Man-Eating Tiger" safely trapped, looked up once more to find Gertie fast asleep ten yards away.

But where was Gordon? He had rambled out of sight, and the unhappy Dennis shook Gertie awake and tried to find out from the startled baby in which direction Gordon had disappeared.

But Gertie only whimpered, "Buzzer gone! Buzzer gone!" which did not help Dennis much. Saying firmly, "Gertie stop here till Dennis comes back," he darted away in search of his charge, quite forgetting about the ice-cream Brick.

He wandered round for a quarter-of-an-hour, vainly calling, "Gordon! Gordon!" before remembering the fountain.

As he hastened towards it he saw a tall policeman holding a dripping, screaming little figure in his arms. It was in a very timid voice that Dennis claimed the missing Gordon.

"You ought to look after your little brother better than this, young man," said the policeman sternly. "I found him sitting in the very middle of the fountain. He might have been drowned if I hadn't happened to pass by. You had better take him straight home before he catches his death of cold."

When Gordon had been half-dragged, half-carried back to the pram under the trees, a still more awful sight appalled the President of the Polar Bears' Ice-Cream Club.

Gertie was smiling in the blazing sunshine, with streams of sticky pink and yellow liquid running all over her curls, her face and hands, and her clothes. The wicked child had undone the newspaper parcel, and carried the Brick out of the shade. This was too much for the ice-cream, which had melted rapidly away while Gertie held it in her hot little hands and contentedly licked it.

As Dennis stood looking at her in blank despair, joyful shouts of "Cooee! Cooee!" reached his ears, and eleven Polar Bears,

waving empty plates, rushed up to him and said—"Well, Pres: here we all are! Now where is the jolly old Brick that you have told us so much about?"

Poor Dennis cast one maddened glance round the ring of eager faces and then, feeling that life was altogether too much for him, flung himself face downwards on the grass to hide his grief and shame. . . .

But lest it should be thought that Dennis resigned his proud position of President and Treasurer, it must be added at once that his Sailor Uncle returned from a cruise in the China Seas, only five days later, and, hearing echoes of this sad story, pressed two shining half-crowns into Dennis's hand, and told him to treat the Polar Bears to "a really good 'blow-out' of ice-cream."

Backed by such a splendid Uncle, who would not remain a President?

THE EASTER HEN

BARBARA'S head felt heavy and buzzy, and her throat was so sore it seemed as if a prickly thistle had got stuck in it half-way down. Every now and then she coughed till her cot rattled, and she was covered all over with bumpy bright red spots.

A large sheet had been dipped in carbolic and hung over the bedroom door, and each evening at six o'clock Mummy popped a thin glass tube with lines and figures written along it into Barbara's mouth, and told her to keep the end of it tucked under her tongue.

Just when Barbara began to think she would have to hold it there for the rest of her life, Mummy drew it out and studied it very carefully. "It is a hundred and two, Nurse," she said one evening, and all through that night Barbara had had horrid dreams, and kept on asking for a drink of water.

To-day was Easter Day and Barbara felt she could hardly bear it.

At that very moment shouts and cries of delight from Patsie, Tony, Joy and Douglas floated up to her window. The children were spending the afternoon hunting all over the garden for Easter eggs. After Christmas it was the loveliest treat of the whole year.

There were pink sugar eggs and chocolate eggs, and red and blue satin eggs full of delicious sweetmeats.

Last Easter Barbara had found more than any of the others, and had climbed up the old apple-tree and discovered a beautiful silver egg perched on a bough, and nearly hidden amongst the apple-blossom.

This year she was too ill to eat chocolate or nougat of course—all she ever found on her tray at meal times was beef-tea and toast, or bread-and-milk.

It is true that Aunt Susy had sent her a large cardboard egg with a dear little doll's tea-set inside, to console her for having measles. But that is not at all the same thing as finding an egg for oneself!

Barbara knew she would cry if she did not sit up at once, and make faces at herself in one of the big round brass knobs of her cot.

Her reflection in the polished metal was so funny that she just had to laugh. All the red spots on her cheek showed quite plainly too.

Her back was turned to the door, which stood a little ajar, but a sudden loud "Cluck, Cluck," made her spin round with a jump, just in time to see Mrs. Speckles, her favourite hen, actually walking into the room.

"Oh, *dear* Mrs. Speckles," cried Barbara, "how kind of you to come and see me! Nobody but Mummy and Nurse has been allowed to visit me for ever and ever so long. But are you sure you won't catch my measles? They are very infectious you know."

"Nonsense, child," said Mrs. Speckles, as with a whirr of all her feathers, she half flew, half jumped right onto the little girl's cot. "Hens never have such silly diseases. You seem to be very well treated indeed," she went on. "They have not put *you* to sit on a scrubbing-brush in a draughty coop as they did me six months ago, when I was 'broody.' They even poured cold water over me just because I was tired and out of sorts, and bored to death at the thought of laying another egg."

It must have been because she was feverish that Barbara found

An unexpected visitor.

she was able for the first time to understand all the old hen was saying.

"We have missed you sadly in the hen-house, my dear," Mrs. Speckles clucked on kindly. "Your sister Ethel does not give us nearly such nice hot meals as you did, nor does she clean our perches so well. Seeing the hall-door was open I thought I would stroll in, to find out what had become of you."

"Dear, sweet Mrs. Speckles," cried Barbara stroking the hen's feathers, "do you know I am so unhappy. Everyone is hunting round the garden for Easter Eggs except me."

"Eggs? What eggs?" asked the old hen sharply. "I have never laid an egg in the garden in my life."

"Oh! sugar and chocolate ones you know," replied Barbara rather nervously.

"Well!" remarked Mrs. Speckles very crossly. "If you are pleased and contented with such stupid vulgar imitations of the *real* thing there is nothing more to be said. I thought you were a child of more sense," and she fluttered angrily as if about to jump off the cot again.

But Barbara put both arms round her and held her fast. She was horrified at the idea of having hurt the old hen's feelings and she said soothingly, "But of course darling Mrs. Speckles, I would much, *much* rather have a beautiful egg laid by you than any other sort of egg in the world. It is only a game we play once a year to celebrate Easter. It would be perfectly horrid to have a chocolate egg for breakfast every morning."

Mrs. Speckles began to look quite pleased and friendly again, and tapping her little friend gently on the cheek she said, "Now, dear Barbara, it is time for you to lie down and have a little nap before tea. I will stay beside you while you sleep."

Barbara was certainly beginning to feel a little drowsy, so still

clasping the hen, she snuggled down and closed her eyes. It seemed that only a minute went by before she was wide awake once more, but alas! her arms were empty, and Mrs. Speckles had disappeared.

Yet, as she leant over the edge of the cot to see if Mrs. Speckles could be strolling about round the room—the most thrilling sight met her eye.

There—carefully laid in one of her little red bedroom slippers—was a lovely large brown egg! ! ! !

Lucky Barbara was allowed to eat kind Mrs. Speckles' Easter present for her tea, and it was from that very precise moment that she grew steadily better.

"THE VIPER"

THERE are yachts on London River, there are steamers and canoes,
But a small tug called "The Viper" is the craft that I would choose,
From her black and scarlet funnel wisps of smoke are flying free,
And she carries six white life-belts for she knows the open sea.

Watch her cut the fawn-grey water into leaping walls of foam
As she speeds to fetch her charges from the wharves that are their home,
Filled with dusty sacks and barrels by a swinging dipping crane,
They will dash behind "The Viper" far up river once again.

I would steer the squat black "Viper" under bridges East or West,
Towing barges—lazy barges—single file or two abreast,
Barges heaped with yellow gravel, barges piled with white cement,
Barges bearing coal or timber—what a life of sheer content!

In my shirt-sleeves all the Summer—wearing oilskins through the cold—
I would keep "The Viper" racing till I earned a bag of gold;
I would live on eggs-and-bacon, sweet tinned-milk and scalding tea,
And the cabin would be crowded with a bunk—a rug—and me.

What's the good of crawling sadly on the dull and solid land,
Since the dancing waters call me to a life so swift and grand?
Some fine day when up the River blows a brisk and salty wind,
You will find me in "The Viper" with five barges roped behind.

SPARROW-LANGUAGE

SYLVIA'S canary was no more than a tiny ball of sulphur-coloured feathers when she started her daily singing-lessons in the Norwich bird-shop.

An old man with a beard and a flute came and sat beside her cage, and played lovely quick trills over and over again, ending on a sweet high-pitched note.

The little canary listened with pleasure to the pretty sounds, and timidly tried to copy them; her pride was great when she found she could complete a long trill quite as cleverly as the flute.

Soon the old man had only to enter the shop, for her to burst into excited song, and the time came when her whole body shook with delight as she made music to herself for hours together.

The old man saw that her education was now finished, and sold her to Miss Rose Graham who sent her to London as a birthday present for her little niece, Sylvia.

Sylvia named her new pet "Sweetie." She never forgot to clean out Sweetie's cage, or to give her fresh water and birdseed every morning; and in return Sweetie loved her mistress and sang her very best, all day long.

Mummy, and Bertha the maid, both declared they had never heard such clear liquid notes, but when Daddy came home from the Office he nearly always said, "For goodness' sake, let somebody put a cover over that cage. Here am I, back from a hard day's work in the City, and I am not even allowed to read the evening paper in peace! That bird's screeching makes me feel as if a corkscrew were being turned round and round in my brain."

Sylvia would run and fetch a neat green baize cover and slip it sadly over Sweetie's gilded cage, and the canary's song would break off as suddenly as the flame of a candle goes out, when an extinguisher is popped over it.

The weather grew so hot on the day that Sylvia went away to the seaside for the Summer holidays, that the cage was moved out on to a high broad window-sill, where Sweetie could enjoy the air and sunshine without fear of cats.

When Sylvia entered the taxi, that was thud-thudding at the front door, she looked up and kissed her hand to Sweetie.

The Canary broke into lovely cascades of music and sang, "Goodbye, goodbye, Little Mistress—Come back soon! Come back soon! Sweet—sweet—sweet!"

Sylvia wedged herself in between hat-boxes, suit-cases, a tea-basket, golf-clubs, and oddly-shaped brown-paper parcels, and strained her ears to catch the last rippling notes as the taxi dashed round the street corner, and whisked her away to the Station.

During Sylvia's absence Bertha was quite kind to Sweetie, but she did not trouble to stop and talk to her in the loving way that the little girl used to do.

Sweetie felt rather lonely, and this must have been the reason why she actually deigned to notice a cheeky band of sooty London sparrows, who fluttered onto her window-ledge in search of stray birdseeds, that might have dropped from her cage.

The sparrows were just like rude and rowdy little boys in their behaviour. They squabbled and fought over the seed, pecking fiercely at each other's eyes, and speaking in shrill vulgar "Chirps" and "Cheeps."

Sweetie felt sure they would be much impressed by her gift of song, and she did several new and original trills for their benefit, whilst they were eating up her birdseed.

But they only laughed coarsely when she had finished, and shouted, "What a 'softie' you are to tire out your throat like that! Those high notes have no earthly meaning. Why don't you learn sparrow-language which is simple and sensible, instead of talking in such a silly affected way?"

The sparrows returned the next day, and the next, and Sweetie had not the heart to sing her beautiful trills again, before the mocking little birds.

Instead she listened to their loud conversation, and saw that sparrow-language was indeed simple, and as ugly and common as possible. When the sparrows were not abusing one another, they were bragging about their thieving exploits and adventures.

Sweetie tried over a harsh note or two, and found she could say them with ease, and though she did not admire the hoarse sounds, she began to feel it was not much good practising her high clear notes, now that Sylvia had gone away and left her.

Gradually she fell into the habit of speaking sparrow-language with the brown birds, repeating their rude remarks, and scolding and swearing just as they did.

The sparrows were delighted. "You have become quite one of us," they said. "It is a pity you cannot change your foolish yellow dress for one of our neat dark suits, but it can't be helped."

Alas, as she gossiped and chatted for hours with her new friends, she forgot little by little how to sing her own charming songs. At last they faded from her mind altogether, and she might have been a London sparrow all her life.

Early in September Sylvia came home from Bognor. She tore upstairs to her bedroom and rushed to the open window where Sweetie sat in her cage. She had expected to hear the canary break into her usual beautiful trills, but she remained quite silent.

"Shut up!" said the Canary.

"Oh, my darling little Sweetie, do sing to me, to welcome me back!" cried Sylvia, "I have missed you such a great, great deal."

Instead of singing delightfully, Sweetie gave a few loud ugly "Cheeps" and "Chirps" and actually turned her back on Sylvia. She was looking out anxiously for the sparrows, who had promised to come and visit her that afternoon.

"See, Sweetie, I have brought you a lovely fresh bunch of groundsel from the country," said Sylvia, who thought her pet must be feeling shy after their long separation.

She thrust the green dainty through the gilded bars but Sweetie only pulled at it in a rough greedy way, and did not sing a single note of thanks.

When Sylvia's mother came up to tell her that tea was ready, she found the little girl almost in tears.

"Oh, Mummy!" she sighed, "Sweetie doesn't love me any more. She won't sing to me at all. She only talks in such an ugly way to the sparrows."

For over a week Sylvia tried most patiently to get Sweetie to sing her old songs and make friends again. But it was all in vain. The canary could only speak sparrow-language now; and her rude surly manner distressed Sylvia so much that she broke down at last and cried for a whole hour.

Her kind Mummy suggested that Sylvia would like two dear little white mice ever so much better—and they would not disturb her dear Daddy either—so Sweetie was given away to the butcher's boy, who had long admired her.

She lives down in a dingy basement now, as far from the window as possible, for fear of prowling tabbies.

She has grown almost silent, and sits a brooding, moulting little figure, without even the consolation of chatting to her former little brown friends in vulgar Sparrow-Language.

THE GREEN CARAVAN

SIX yellow Flying Boats swung in great curves up into the blue sky.

When they rushed downwards they almost touched the faces of the crowd standing below; then up and up they climbed again, cutting through the cool air, and racing towards the sun.

"Oh, Dick, please don't swing any higher!" pleaded Muriel, who clung to the cords of their boat and looked very unhappy. "I know we shall turn upside-down if you do! I can't bear it any longer—I want to get out."

"Don't be a little silly!" cried Dick who was working with all his might to make their boat rise higher than the one next to them. "Instead of whining, you might bend your knees and pull a bit. Look! Jack and Bill are swinging ever so much further than we do. I wish I had a boy in here to help me. Girls are no use!"

Dick had been given two shillings by his Daddy to spend on his cousin and himself at the Mudsea Fair, and he did not want to waste any of it.

The children walked three miles through the dusty lanes to get there, and had spent fourpence on glasses of lime-juice, for their throats were quite parched when they arrived.

Two bags of confetti at a penny each simply had to be bought in order to pelt the children who flung handfuls in their faces, and thrust it down their necks.

Sixpence more vanished in a flash, alas, with only a crumbly packet of chewing-gum that tasted of soap, to show for it. They

invested the money in a dozen small wooden hoops and vainly tried to throw eleven of them over pink china pigs, green glass vases, packets of cigarettes and sweets, and pearl necklaces, that were laid out temptingly on a flat space inside a tent. Dick secured the chewing-gum with the twelfth ring, but after the first lick he decided that Muriel might as well finish it.

The Flying Boats cost another sixpence so no wonder he wanted to get good value out of their trip! There was only just enough left to treat them both to a ride on the Merry-go-Round, and then all their fun would be over.

Perhaps it was the chewing-gum that made Muriel look so pale.

Dick hardened his heart, and shoved the Boat higher still though his cousin's eyes filled with frightened tears. Luckily for her all the Boats were slowed down before long by the man in charge, and the children climbed out, Dick somewhat cross and disappointed, and Muriel delighted but still dizzy.

Without allowing the poor little girl time to recover, Dick dragged her through the throng of farmers and fishermen, and children, towards the centre of the Fair, where the finest Merry-go-Round that had ever come to Mudsea spun round and round to deafening music.

Each horse wore a red velvet saddle and had its name painted on its side in gold letters, and they all rose up and down on long brass rods, as they swung round.

"Napoleon" was a fiery steed of dapple grey, with a wicked look in his wild glass eyes. Dick decided that Muriel should ride "Napoleon," and he hoisted her into the saddle and left her with her arms clasped tightly round her horse's neck.

He himself mounted "Wellington," a coal black Mustang with sky-blue mane and hoofs.

A tall man in riding breeches, wearing many war-ribbons, collected Dick's last sixpence. After giving three loud fierce hoots, the Merry-go-Round started off slowly at first, and then faster and faster.

Poor little Muriel had a dreadful ride. She was still dazed and swimmy in the head, from her trip in the Flying Boat, and when "Napoleon" began to bound up and down as he glided rapidly round, she closed her eyes and felt horribly sea-sick.

It seemed as if a hundred years went by before "Napoleon" left off plunging and rearing, and slackened speed. Muriel had laid her white face on Napoleon's orange mane, and was quite sure she would never be able to raise it again.

She felt Dick pulling at her leg and heard him say, "Muriel, *do* get off! The Merry-go-Round will go on in a moment, and I have no money for another ride." But it was no good, she simply could not stir. She did not answer and still kept her face hidden, feeling that if she left go of "Napoleon" she would go swinging and flying and rolling right off the world, for ever and ever.

Dick in despair scrambled back on to "Wellington" just as the three hoots sounded once more, and vainly hoped that the man in the riding breeches would forget to ask him for another sixpence.

"Now then, you only paid for one turn, you know!" said the man, laying his hand on "Wellington's" neck.

"I haven't any more money. It's all a mistake. I didn't mean to have another ride," blurted Dick with the sounds of "The Last Rose of Summer" nearly drowning his voice.

"Oh, so you are one of the little rascals who try to sneak free rides, are you?" said the man angrily. "Just wait till the turn is over. You and the little girl will come with me straight to Mr. Harris who owns this show. He will give you in charge quick enough."

Muriel grew giddy, dizzy and sick.

Dick had a horrid sick sensation on hearing this, but he did not feel quite as sick as Muriel who wished that she could die as "Napoleon" waltzed giddily round again.

The last note had scarcely sounded before the tall man whisked her out of the saddle and holding her fast with one hand, and Dick with the other, pulled the children down from the Merry-go-Round.

He dived with them right underneath it and they found themselves in front of a short stout man who was oiling the machinery in the very heart of the Merry-go-Round.

He wiped his fat hands on a piece of black rag and looked Dick straight in the eyes, as the boy began to stutter and stammer out an explanation in answer to the tall man's accusations.

But he had not got far when Muriel astonished them all by giving a little gasp, and then fainting away. The heat and the smell of warm oil were the last straws.

The cross look left both the men's faces as they picked her up and carried her gently out into the fresh air and through the crowd, towards a beautiful green caravan on the outskirts of the Fair. They went up the caravan steps and laid her on a cosy bunk inside the cool spotless little place—Dick followed them looking pale himself from worry and anxiety. He had never seen anyone faint before.

"I'll fetch Mrs. Harris from the Cocoa-Shy, to look after the poor little thing," said the fat man. "You can earn your ride on the Merry-go-Round by taking my wife's place at the 'Shy' while she brings your sister round," he told Dick. "We are short-handed now as my boy Alfred has gone to buy some shrimps and fish for tea."

As they hurried along to the Cocoa-Shy Dick succeeded in explaining that his cousin had felt too ill and giddy to get off

"Napoleon" at the right moment, and Mr. Harris said kindly, "Well, I thought you were an honest boy as soon as I set eyes on you. Cheer up, your cousin will soon be well again!"

The Cocoa-Shy was crowded, and a big woman with very pink cheeks and black hair and a large feathered hat was kept busy handing out three white balls for every sixpence.

The cocoa-nuts stood in rows, each balanced in a brass cup on a stake thrust into the earth, and as the balls were light and small only a very hard straight shot ever brought one down.

When Mr. Harris had told his wife about Muriel she nodded, and said to Dick, "Now, Little 'Un, just run in and pick up all those balls first! Don't knock the nuts off their perches, and don't get hit yourself if you can help it."

Dick hastily gathered up the balls that were scattered all over the grass, but was not quite quick enough to avoid one that was flung by a burly fisherman. It hit him very hard and painfully in the eye. He felt half-blinded, but he set his teeth and said nothing about it, for he longed to repay the Harris's for their kindness.

While she was gone he stood proudly with the large basket of balls, and cried out in quite a grown-up manner, "Come and try your luck! Fine ripe cocoa-nuts! Three shies for sixpence!"

He had a splendid harvest of silver to hand to Mrs. Harris when she took his place with a grateful smile half-an-hour later.

"Your cousin is all right now and having a good rest in our van," she said. "If you like to go and join her you will find our Alfred there cooking a bit of fish. We will all have a cup of tea together before long. But whatever have you done to your eye, Sonny? It's as black as my hat! You and your cousin *are* getting into the wars this afternoon and no mistake!"

Mumbling something about stopping a ball with his face, Dick ran off and entered the green caravan to find a dark-eyed boy of

his own age, cleverly frying fish on a small cooking-stove, while Muriel sat propped up on the bunk and looked almost her old self again.

She had already made friends with Alfred. He was telling her about the thrilling life they led, travelling from Fair to Fair all through the year, except for six weeks at Christmas. They laid up at Ipswich then, and the vans and the Merry-go-Round were repaired and freshly painted.

They had a most delightful tea-party when Mr. and Mrs. Harris and the man in charge of the Merry-go-Round, crowded into the van during a slack interval.

Mrs. Harris took a pink tea-set out of a locker and they sat so close together that there was hardly room to raise their elbows and drink the strong tea.

As Dick munched his fish he looked with great admiration at the fine display of shining silver vases full of red and white paper roses, and at the smart silver hair brushes on Mrs. Harris's tiny dressing-table at the far end of the van.

They could scarcely tear themselves away when the last crumb had been eaten. Dick was actually given two gorgeous free rides on "Wellington," while Muriel helped Alfred to wash up the tea-things; (it was no treat for *him* to go on the Merry-go-Round) and they were each presented with a large hairy cocoa-nut by kind Mrs. Harris.

Promising their new friends to come to the Fair next year and have tea with them again, the children started off for home.

On the way back Dick said happily several times, "Wasn't it a lucky thing that you felt so ill and fainted away, Muriel?"

And in spite of all she had suffered, Muriel joyfully agreed.

THE COCK WHO CROWED AT THE MOON

IT was a Cock as black as jet
(Save for one snowy white tail-feather)
Who strutted, laying down the law
On moulting, chicken-foods and weather;
His bumptious "Cock-a-doodle doo!"
Informed the world how much he knew.

One night a full-blown Harvest Moon
Rose ruddy as the sun at dawn,
"Up, Hens! Lay eggs and scratch for worms!"
He shrilled, "It is already morn!"
Each wife of this deluded bird
Leapt from her perch without a word.

His lusty high-pitched clarion calls
Cut through the dark, and roused from slumber
Full fifty cocks on farms around,
And live-stock more than I could number;
A hundred watch-dogs made remarks
And swelled the din with throaty barks!

Five hundred fractious Babies woke
Delighted at a chance to weep;
Jogging their infants up and down
Five hundred Mothers lost their sleep,
Five hundred Daddies' angry growls
Blended with cock-crows, barks and howls.

"Get up! Get up! Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

The moon moved calmly on her way,
The sky remained as dark as blacking,
The Cock concealed his wild amaze,
His flustered wives to bed went packing.
He snapped, " You're keeping me awake;
The sun has made some strange mistake."

* * * * *

The Dawn looked down on cots and farms,
Their inmates over-slept and snored,
The watch-dogs never stirred till noon,
All cocks stayed mute with one accord. . . .
The secret of the night's unrest
Lay locked within one jet-black breast.

THE CHOCOLATE HIGHLANDER

THE Chocolate Highlander stood by himself on a small branch of the Christmas Tree.

He had on a gay green and red tartan kilt of shiny paper, and a little sporran made out of mouse fur. He was dancing with one knee cocked up and one chocolate arm raised above his head, and his brown upturned face wore a broad grin.

But though the smile was fixed upon his lips he felt far from cheerful or contented.

From his perch on the frosted pine needles he could see dangling above him, quite out of reach, the most lovely little pink and white Sugar Fairy.

How delightful she looked in her full short skirts of pink spin sugar, and her silver ribbon sash! On her head was a glittering tinsel crown and in each outstretched hand she held a pink sugar rose.

The Highlander had fallen in love with her at first sight, and he thought that if she would only throw him a rose he would be completely happy, but though he cleared his throat and tried to attract her attention by saying in chocolate language, "What remarkably fine weather we are having for the time of year!" she paid not the slightest heed to his remarks.

That evening, tapers of all the colours of the rainbow were lighted on every branch, and the Highlander felt how fitting it was that there should be such grand illuminations in her honour.

Down below him a crowd of children sang and danced round the tree in a ring.

How the Chocolate Highlander loved the Sugar Fairy.

"They are singing and dancing to please her," he thought, "but none of them dance as neatly and cleverly as *I* do."

Just then a strong smell of burning pine arose, for one purple taper had bent suddenly double, and set a branch of the tree on fire.

The children stopped singing and ran shouting and crying to the other end of the room, while their elders blew out the rest of the tapers and tried in vain to beat down the flames. Then they rushed off to fetch big pails of water.

The Highlander grew very hot indeed, though his side of the tree was only smouldering still. The chocolate arm that he raised so high in the dance began to melt and run into the queerest stumpy shape, and the chocolate dripped off both his knees.

But though it hurt very much indeed he was not thinking of his own sufferings, but of the little Sugar Fairy.

The cruel yellow flames had climbed up the tree towards her and were actually licking the edge of her pink sugar dress. Soon it would be melted quite away, and how could the poor little thing face the world without any skirts?

The Highlander dared not believe his eyes when he saw the Sugar Fairy leap forward through the flames and smoke, and come to rest on the branch beside him. Wonder of wonders—her outstretched arm was flung tightly round his chocolate neck.

The silver cord that fastened her to the tree had been snapped by the fire, but the Highlander did not know this. He believed she had read the love and devotion on his face, and had jumped down beside him to be cheered and protected.

So it was a terrible blow when she said in a clear little sugary voice—"I do wish you would take your neck away from my arm. I don't know you, and I don't like you a bit. You are such a funny ugly creature."

The Highlander might have replied that her sugar nose was nothing but a blob, and that her skirts were all scorched and in holes, but he only said meekly, "I am ever so sorry, but I am afraid we must have melted together in this heat. I am feeling very sticky myself this evening."

The harder the Sugar Fairy tried to pull away from him the closer they grew together, and as their part of the tree became hotter and hotter she gave it up in despair.

Her lovely face was now quite brown and twisted but it made no difference at all to the feelings of the Highlander.

Just as he was rejoicing that they would at least be frizzled up together, an icy douche of water descended upon them, and made them rock and quiver on their charred branch.

More and still more water was dashed over them till they ceased melting, and began to stiffen with the cold.

"I must be looking a perfect fright," said the Sugar Fairy crossly. "I know my silver crown is all on one side."

"I think you are perfectly beautiful," said the Highlander.

This made the Sugar Fairy feel more friendly and she was almost glad that her arm had stuck so tightly round his neck that she could not take it away, now the danger was over.

Presently they were picked off the tree by a large strong hand, and a man's voice said, "Why children, just look here! These two have been melted together, so that you can hardly tell which is which."

The children roared with laughter at the comic sight and one of the little guests cried out, "Oh, please may I have them to add to my collection of Funny Freaks?"

They were handed over to the little boy who took them home to live in a corner-cupboard with a glass door, that hung in his bedroom.

There they stood with all sorts of absurd objects—india-rubber faces that pulled into the oddest shapes—and queer china animals, and other ridiculous toys.

The little boy often peeped in before he jumped into bed, and the two figures made him shake with laughter.

But the Highlander always whispered to the Sugar Fairy, "Of course it is *me* he is laughing at, for *you* are looking lovelier and more beautiful and sweeter than ever."

THE POOL

AT eight o'clock precisely the big gates of the Public Park were unlocked by a cross-looking Keeper, who wore a dusty green uniform, with the coat still unbuttoned.

At eleven minutes past eight little Billie West, dressed in a sweater and patched knickers, and carrying a long thin stick, scuttled through the gates and made a dash past the red brick cottage where the Keeper was now eating his breakfast of dried haddock and tea.

Billie trotted along at a good pace to the rose-garden and spent several minutes staring at a fat pink rose as keenly as if he were a rose-grower himself.

He then quietly retraced his steps some twenty yards, and hurried down a side path, that turned and twisted between a thicket of lilac-bushes, and ended in six broad stone steps.

Below them gleamed the Pool of the Gold and Silver Fish.

Glancing round to make sure that nobody was about, Billie drew two small packets from his trouser-pockets, and curled himself up on the lowest step.

The beautiful glittering Fish were resting in the shadow of the grey stones, or playing "hide-and-seek," and "touch-weed" among the stems of the water-plants.

Billie watched them with an odd greedy look before undoing his two packets. One contained crumbs—the other was a small folded shrimping-net.

He shook out the net and screwed it onto his long thin stick—and gazed about him once more, before scattering the crumbs over the surface of the clear green pool.

Caught in the act.

One after the other the Gold and Silver Fish rose up through the water, and touched the crumbs with their blunt noses. A few of the younger ones swallowed them.

The finest Fish of them all, covered with flashing red-gold scales, moved slowly to the top, and then scornfully turned his tail on the stale bread. He was about to sink down again when Billie slipped the shrimping-net beneath him, scooped him in, and drew him all squirming and wriggling onto the stone step.

He lifted the gasping Fish out of the net and gripped him tightly in one hand, while with the other he dipped a large dirty pocket-handkerchief into the water.

In another moment the frantic Fish would have been wrapped in the damp handkerchief had not heavy footsteps sounded—"Crunch! Scrunch!"—behind Billie.

Thrusting the Fish into a trouser-pocket, he was up the six steps in a flash, and had plunged into the shelter of the lilacs.

He dropped his stick, shrimping-net and handkerchief in the middle of the thickest bush and he could feel the Golden Fish turning and twisting against his leg as he crept stealthily towards the open Park.

But just as he reached the edge of the thicket a gruff voice said—"Been tampering with the Fish, have you? Come out of that at once, you young rascal!" and a large red hand was thrust through the lilac flowers and caught him by the collar.

"Fish, Sir?" said Billie in a voice that simply *would* tremble, as he was dragged into the full light of day. "I haven't touched the Fish, Sir! I was feeding them with breadcrumbs, that was all"; and he tried to look the Park-keeper in the face.

"Then what did you want to go and hide for, if you hadn't done something you shouldn't?" asked the Keeper grimly.

"I was just going for a little walk to—to smell the lilacs, Sir," quavered Billie.

"The lilacs seem to be growing queer flowers this year!" barked the Keeper, whose sharp eyes had caught a glimpse of Billie's handkerchief and shrimping-net through the green branches. "Do you mean to tell me that isn't *your* rubbish stuck in that bush?"

"Never seen it before, Sir," said Billie shakily.

"Well, you will kindly come with me and have a good look at it now," growled the Keeper. He had slightly loosened his hold of Billie's collar, and as he stepped into the thicket, Billie gave a sudden wild jerk and his collar came right away in the Keeper's hand.

With mad leaps and bounds he was off at top speed, over the grass—anywhere—out of reach of that large red hand.

Billie might have won safety, had not the Golden Fish, with a last terrific plunge, found his way through a hole in the bottom of the trouser-pocket in which he was imprisoned. The shining Fish dropped on to the long grass and as Billie paused to snatch up his treasure again, he felt the Keeper's heavy clutch on his shoulder and knew that the game was up.

It was now Billie's turn to squirm and wriggle beneath the sharp cuts of his own long thin stick, smartly wielded by the furious Keeper.

When his richly-deserved punishment was over, and the Keeper had walked snorting away, Billie stooped very painfully to pick up his poached Fish.

He would revive in water, of course, and Billie would keep him in a large bowl in his bedroom and gloat over his bright colour and the lovely way in which he waved his gold fins.

But the shining body lay quite still in Billie's hand, and the little boy could no longer feel a quiver, or the slightest movement.

The Golden Fish was dead!

MY SNAPDRAGON FLOWER BUNNY

BOB has two apple-green love-birds who sit
On one perch closely cuddled together,
Anne keeps a kid—he will grow up some day
And be turned into waistcoats of leather.
Jack owns a tortoise who lives on the lawn
And eats flies when the weather is sunny,
But I am too young for live animals yet—
So my Pet is a Snapdragon Bunny.

I carry him round in a small cardboard hutch,
He is coloured bright orange and yellow,
Though he has nothing more than a head and a neck
He's a beautiful fat little fellow.
I squeeze his mouth open when feeding-time comes
And the faces he makes are so funny.
He swallows down cake-crumbs and morsels of grass,
Such a greedy old Snapdragon Bunny.

Other folks' animals make such a noise
Always barking or mewing or squeaking,
But "Snap" is too clever to chatter away
And he listens whenever I'm speaking.
When I'm six-foot like Daddy and run for the train,
And smoke pipes and earn plenty of money
No tame lions or tigers or monkeys for *me!*—
I shall still keep a Snapdragon Bunny.

THE BALLOON THAT RAN AWAY

THE old Balloon-Woman was almost hidden behind the floating mass of blue and green and yellow and purple air-balls, as George hurried towards her.

He held the two-pence he had won from Daddy the day before, for swimming ten good breast-strokes, without once dropping a toe to the bottom of the sea.

He meant to buy the finest balloon he could find, and after looking them over he decided on a beautiful large red one, that was straining at its string in a wild excited manner.

The strong breeze had a salt taste and the blue waves had white foam on their crests, as George raced down to the beach.

All at once there came a big puff of wind—the string slipped, and ran through his fingers, and the Red Balloon was off—hop—hop—hop—down the sands.

"How glad I am to be free at last!" said the Red Balloon, giving a playful leap on to the back of an old crab who was crooning the Crabs' Hunting Song as he hastened along sideways.

"Scramble, scuttle, pinch and nip.
Speed with leg and claw;
Never let a morsel slip
On the salt seashore."

He broke off and tried to pinch the Red Balloon, but he was just a second too late.

The Red Balloon had gone on jump—jump—jump—right into a small salt pool where the shrimps were singing their sad little dirge—

Balloons.

"Let's make the most of every hour,
Our lives are brief you see,
Since greedy children big and small
Delight in shrimps for tea."

They swam round in a great fright waving their whiskers, for they felt sure that this was a new kind of sea-beast who would devour them all, before the children got a chance.

But the Red Balloon skimmed lightly across the surface of the pool and quite ignored them. He was off again, bounce, bounce, bounce, over the rocks, and plop into the blue waves.

"How nice it is to lie and float in the sea in peace!" said the Red Balloon. "Now George cannot hold me any more at the end of a string. I do not like George at all."

Just then a shoal of blue and green mackerel swam under him and thought it would be great fun to play "nose-ball" with the Red Balloon.

They tossed him from one to the other and sang the Mackerel chant that runs—

"Dive and tumble and flap a fin,
The wide sea-fields are for playing in.
On with the game—and may both sides win."

The Red Balloon did not enjoy being pushed about like this. It hurt his dignity. However, the Mackerel "nose-ball" teams did not finish their game this time, as a big gull flew up and caught hold of his string that was trailing in the water.

She thought that her six children who lived far out on a lonely rock, would be pleased with this strange red ball.

She flew with the Red Balloon for some distance, before she spotted just the kind of fish she liked best, leaping through a wave beneath her; forgetting the string in her beak she dived down and grabbed the little fish, setting the Red Balloon free once more.

But his freedom did not last long, for there were two men setting lobster-pots from their small boat near by, and when they saw him dancing over the waves they rowed up and caught him, by means of an oar—though he pulled and fought, and tried to float away, with all his might.

Now George had spent most of the time chasing his runaway plaything. He raced and tore after him but never quite caught him up. He had nearly dived in from the edge of the rocks when the Red Balloon launched forth upon the waves, and when the fishermen had captured him, George shouted and yelled and waved with such vigour that they kindly pulled in alongside a big rock, and handed the air-ball back to the little boy.

How furious the Red Balloon felt as the boat drew nearer and nearer the shore, and he was given to George again.

George took him straight home and tied him to the back of a chair in the nursery, as a punishment.

The Red Balloon moped and sulked till he grew quite ill and pined away; he became so limp and soft that George feared he had been too harsh with him, and tried hard to blow him up again.

But it was too late—the poor Red Balloon shrank and shrank till he was only the size of George's fist.

At last George pressed him out quite flat and threw him into the fire, and that was the sad end of the wild Red Balloon.

THE RED SILK DRESS

"NOW Syringa and Harebell, come along at once! It is time to put on your yachting costumes," cried Anne, as she flung open the green painted front door of the dolls' house, in a great hurry.

The wildest excitement had reigned in the dolls' smart red and white villa ever since Anne promised its inmates that on the first fine day they should go for a sail in the "Sea-Lion"—Brother Kit's beautiful new toy boat.

Harebell, a plump doll with pink china cheeks and two flaxen pigtails, secretly felt rather frightened, for the pond had looked very large indeed when viewed from the dolls' perambulator.

Syringa, on the other hand, was nearly bursting with pride and delight. What fun it would be to boast of her lovely trip on the water to the rocking-horse and the stuffed monkey and all the other toys who had not been invited!

It took Anne no time at all to slip Harebell into a neat white knitted skirt and jumper, and to put a white cap on her flaxen head.

Syringa, a lovely doll with dark eyes and curls, and a proud haughty expression, was wearing a bright red silk frock, which she much preferred to the simple white dress that Anne had prepared for her.

She made up her mind not to put it on, but to go for the sail in the gay red silk; so when Anne struggled to untie her sash, which had got into a tight knot, Syringa would not help her at all, but flopped nearly double in the most tiresome manner.

"The 'Sea-Lion' is just weighing anchor, Anne," shouted Kit as he dashed into the Nursery. "If the dolls want to come, you must bring them along at once," and off he rushed again.

Anne made one more attempt to undo Syringa's sash, but Syringa kept falling over in a clever manner, and preventing her.

"Bother!" said Anne. "You will have to come as you are, Syringa, but don't get wet, or the colour of your red frock will run like anything."

The "Sea-Lion's" sails were already unfurled and set, when Anne and the Dolls reached the landing stage. Syringa was lifted in first and her red silk skirts spread all over the bottom of the boat, leaving very little room for Harebell.

Each time that Anne attempted to wedge Harebell in beside her, Syringa toppled sideways and rolled on the top of the poor little doll, nearly smothering her.

Syringa had decided to go for the sail alone, in order to keep all the honour and glory for herself.

At last Kit said, "Harebell will have to go some other time. There does not seem to be room for them both," and before Syringa realized what was happening, he had given the boat a good shove, and she was already far from the shore.

The pond was certainly wide, and it would take a long time, even with the most favourable breeze for the "Sea-Lion" to reach the opposite side, but the wind seemed to be rising every minute, and the water began to look black and stormy.

Before long there was a splash, and some drops of water fell on Syringa's gay red dress. She felt worried about it, and cold in the thin silk frock, and she wished she had let Anne put her into the cosy white jumper.

Many splashes followed and Syringa soon found herself sitting in a chilly pool of water. She looked sadly out, and was frightened

"Help! Help!"

to find that the " Sea-Lion " was being blown towards a small island in the middle of the pond.

It was known to Anne and Kit as " Duck Island," for it was the home of many ducks who slept in an old wooden shelter, and took refuge there when it was stormy.

A minute later the boat crashed into the Island with a terrible bump and Syringa was flung out face downward into thick black mud.

She would have sunk deep down in the mud never to be seen again, had it not been for an inquisitive young duck who was hunting for worms.

He paid little heed when the toy ship was driven ashore, for pieces of driftwood were often cast up by the wind, but he caught sight of a bit of Syringa's leg and hoped it was some new exciting sort of worm.

He pulled and pulled at the leg and Syringa, all black and dripping, rose slowly out of the mud. The young duck nearly let her fall back again—she gave him such a shock—but just then several of his friends waddled up, and wanted to see his prize.

They tweaked and prodded Syringa all over and soon decided she was not any good to eat. So she was handed as a plaything to a batch of fluffy yellow ducklings. What a horrible time of it she had !

The ducklings trod on her face and bit her arms and legs, and dragged her along by her torn red dress to a dirty corner of the dark shelter where they left her all alone, when they had grown tired of her.

Meantime Kit and Anne had been watching the wreck of the " Sea-Lion " with great anxiety ; Kit hoped that his beautiful boat had not sprung a leak when she ran aground.

Anne was worried to death over the fate of poor Syringa.

But Harebell felt only too happy to be sitting safely on dry ground.

It seemed hours later to unhappy draggled Syringa when she heard the voices of Anne, Kit and their Daddy as they landed on the island.

She could see nothing, for she still lay in the Ducks' shelter, pining bitterly for her comfortable dolls' house home, and for Harebell, whom she had treated so unkindly.

"The 'Sea-Lion' is all right, thank goodness!" said Kit who had leapt hastily out of the big rowing-boat, in which Daddy had brought the children to hunt for their lost toys.

"But where is poor Syringa?" wailed Anne. "I don't see a sign of her."

"I expect she is drowned," said Kit.

Anne burst into tears, and Syringa who heard all their conversation, longed to cry out in human language, and beg them to take her away from the smelly ducks' shelter.

"Why, here is a scrap of her red dress," said Daddy. "Cheer up, Anne, she can't be far off!"

But though they all three looked about and peered under all the bushes that grew by the water-side, Syringa was nowhere to be found.

They were on the point of rowing sadly home without her, when a great piece of luck befell Syringa, though it made her suffer and feel humbled at the time.

The fat old Mother of the fluffy yellow ducklings came into the shelter and stepped right on Syringa in her dark corner.

"Dear me, how tiresome my children are, bringing all their dirty old rubbish in here!" quacked the Mother Duck angrily. With several kicks, and sharp shoves from her bill, she thrust Syringa from the shelter, and thus it was that Anne saw her roll out, looking

a perfectly awful object, plastered with slimy mud from head to foot, and with her red dress in tatters.

When Anne had brought Syringa safe home again she spent the whole afternoon trying to wash her clean. The mud came off at last, but the crimson stains from the red silk frock still covered Syringa's face and her poor chipped hands and legs. Nothing would get them off, and Anne sorrowfully decided that Syringa must become a scarlet-fever patient for life.

So Syringa lies in bed in the dolls' house, and feels too dull for words, while Harebell nurses her in a smart V.A.D. costume.

And every time Syringa looks at her ugly bright red hands she wishes harder and harder that she had been a sensible doll and had not gone out sailing in her best Red Silk Dress.

THE VILLAGE SHOP

THE Stores have gorgeous window shows in noisy crowded towns,
But I would rather keep a shop like dear old "Granny" Brown's.
A village shop—a cosy shop, that smells of cheese and soaps,
Set out with sticks of liquorice, and balls, and skipping-ropes.

A shopwalker is wonderful—he wears an oily smile,
And if I want a row of pins he leads me half-a-mile,
But "Granny" merely lifts a hand, or reaches down a box
When asked for ink, and calico, and frying-pans, and socks.

The London shops, like palaces, stand glittering at night,
But "Granny's" old horn-lantern sheds a far more friendly light—
On Winter afternoons we race towards it, down the lane
And buy a bag of peppermints, and scamper home again.

The shops in Town are big and grand, but no one knows or cares
About the prize Jim won at school, or how Ann fell downstairs,
Now Granny, when I've bought a pile of cakes or gingerbread,
Will sometimes add a sugar heart that bears my name in red.

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